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Writing in Blood: Compassion, Character, and Popular Rhetoric in Rousseau and Nietzsche

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Writing in Blood: Compassion, Character, and Popular Rhetoric in Rousseau and Nietzsche

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*This study explores the normative role of emotional rhetoric and the social passions (with an emphasis on compassion) in politics through a consideration of the divergent perspectives of Rousseau and Nietzsche. These two invite comparison not only because of the wide range of ideas they represent, but also because each employed rare rhetorical skill to effect extensive cultural change. To analyze this dynamic relationship between theory and practice, I focus on how each philosopher sought to transform the sentimental basis of social and political life. I argue that Rousseau, through his intentional use of sentimental rhetoric, inspired cultural romanticism and the equity of the political left, and that Nietzsche, through his extreme attack on ordinary compassion, and his invocation of tragic pity and the "*pathos *of distance," hoped to prevent nihilism from taking root in the modern spirit by bringing about an age of renewed cultural depth and robust individualism.*

My study is unique in its investigation of the autobiographical rhetoric of the two philosophers. I argue that both Rousseau and Nietzsche wrote autobiographies that exemplify their respective philosophical teachings on the sentiments, which is to say that in the autobiographical works they employ personal rhetoric aimed at illuminating and reinforcing these teachings. Rousseau's pathos*-filled self-presentation serves his vision for a withdrawn cultural elite that, while tolerated and quietly influential, does not enjoy public honors; Nietzsche, I suggest, worries that the cost of privatizing great individual virtue will be too high; his bombastic self-portrait not only satirizes faux Rousseauian vulnerability, but also serves personally to exemplify the possibility of a new cultural super-authority. In both cases, I suggest, a fundamental consistency exists between their theoretical teachings and their self-presentations, such that their autobiographical works should be understood as integrated parts of their greater philosophic projects.*

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Introduction

Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Friedrich Nietzsche are two commanding thinkers of the modern age. Ill-content merely to contribute in traditional fields of academic philosophy (epistemology, ontology, ethics), they each devoted their lives additionally to music, literature, psychology, education, history, politics, and theology, among other things. They exerted enormous influence, and continue to shape the ways in which we understand human life today; both are controversial icons of the Western canon, who inspire recurring generations of devotees and critics. In many respects, however, the similarities between the two are merely formal. Despite their many shared concerns, Rousseau and Nietzsche seldom fail to provide a rich study in substantive contrasts. We might characterize the core divergences as follows: Rousseau, largely through his endorsement of sentiment and fellow-feeling over and against enlightenment rationalism, inspired cultural romanticism and the equity of the modern political left, while Nietzsche, through his vivid articulation of the problem of nihilism and his extreme attack on democratic *mores*, tried to bring about an age of renewed cultural depth, and the aristocratic individualism of the conservative right. Both have been blamed for the rise of totalitarianism. These two philosophers invite comparison, then, both because they express such very different perspectives, and because they do so with rare literary power that in each case has had a sustained, if sometimes devastating, influence. This study is concerned with the dynamic and dangerous relationship between theory and practice that is manifest in their political philosophy.

Granting that Rousseau and Nietzsche each contributed extensively to cultural and political change, how did they do it, and why? The first question is more straightforward, and it is only through it that I approach the second. My answer to the question of the

philosophers' method consists, in a sense, of a single word: rhetoric. To the extent that I am concerned with how Rousseau and Nietzsche became so influential, I am interested in how they used the art of rhetoric – described long ago by Aristotle as a counterpart to dialectics (*Rhetoric,* 1354a1), that grows alongside politics (1356a25-27), and is concerned with the means of persuasion (1354a12-14, 1355a3-5) – in deliberate ways aimed at transforming the sentimental and ethical foundations of social and political life. But this raises another question: how *did* they employ rhetoric to make their writings so persuasive? Once one considers all that goes into good, effective rhetoric, the question of the influence of Rousseau and Nietzsche comes to light as rather complicated. A truly successful act of rhetoric requires, for example, a good motive (hardly an uncomplicated prerequisite), a plausible argument, sufficient understanding of human psychology to draw on the passions, an accurate understanding of one's audience (however diverse), an accurate understanding of one's time (if only to avail oneself of appropriate media), and some sort of personal credibility. Even leaving aside the normative question of motives, broad-scale rhetorical effectiveness necessarily involves substantial knowledge of human psychology.

My study is especially concerned with two dimensions of the rhetoric employed by Rousseau and Nietzsche: appeals to the passions – especially those involving compassion – and appeals to character. In Aristotle's treatment we learn that a rhetorical act involves three things: the thing being discussed, the audience, and the speaker. These correspond roughly to his three main concerns in the *Rhetoric,* which are the arguments being presented (*logos*), the emotional condition of the listeners (*pathos*), and the character of the orator (*ethos*).[1] While this Aristotelian framework does not govern my

[1] These themes are discussed most explicitly in *Rhetoric* 2.1, but as Sachs notes in his lucid introduction to the *Rhetoric*, these famous categories also correspond to the structure of the *Rhetoric* itself (2009, 24-25). *Logos* in this context refers to argument or reason; *pathos* indicates the cluster of words pertaining to

study in any strict sense, it does prove helpful in explaining, in a preliminary way, my choice to focus on compassion and character in the works of Rousseau and Nietzsche. With the rise of modern rationalism, we have become proficient in *logos*. This is perhaps best exemplified by the rise of analytic schools of philosophy, and of positivism in the social sciences. But, as postmodernist and critical theorists are quick to point out, our fascination with reason has sometimes come at the expense of our appreciation for other, "human-all-too-human," factors that shape human life. Aristotle, through his own artful reasonings, calls our attention to the passions and personal character as critical to our understanding of political persuasion; Rousseau and Nietzsche, each in their own dramatic way, demonstrate the power of emotional and authorial appeals.

As moderns and students of Rousseau and Nietzsche, I argue, we have to be especially attentive to the rhetorical role played by compassion, and to the rhetorical significance of their respective autobiographical works. While I am interested on a general level in the rhetorical interplay of passions, character, and reason, Rousseau and Nietzsche tend to focus our attention on compassion in particular among the emotions (Rousseau is for it, Nietzsche against), as well as on themselves as authors. My suggestion is that such choices are not arbitrary, but reflect clear rhetorical strategies informed by specific concerns about political and cultural trends that continue to be relevant today. The concern for compassion that animates both Rousseau and Nietzsche is linked to the modern rise of democratic forms, and their choices of self-presentation arguably do as well (Rousseau seduces the common man with his rhetoric of victimization, while Nietzsche's overt self-satisfaction alienates). Their respective

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passion, emotion, sentiment, feeling, humor, or affect; *ethos* is a Greek word pertaining to moral character deriving from customary habit or conduct (related to but not identical to the English *ethics*).

concern for the 'self' also reflects, among other things, the modern turn away from metaphysics.

The following study involves an in-depth analysis of the respective rhetorical treatments of compassion by Rousseau and Nietzsche, as well as an evaluation of the rhetoric of their autobiographical works. I argue that both philosophers employ rhetoric to transform existing sentiments, and to forge new ones, and they thus alter social relations in ways that sustain and serve specific political orders. To do this, they blend arguments and emotional appeals in the classical rhetorical mode, but they also involve themselves in their rhetorical projects in revealing ways. Rousseau's *pathos*-filled self-presentation serves his vision for a withdrawn cultural elite that, while tolerated and quietly influential, does not enjoy public honors; Nietzsche's bombastic self-portrait not only satirizes *faux* Rousseauian vulnerability, but also serves personally to exemplify the possibility of a new cultural super-authority. In both cases, I suggest, a fundamental consistency exists between their respective teachings on compassion and their self-presentations, such that their autobiographical works should be understood as integrated parts of their philosophic projects.

By way of an introduction, I first seek to explain my characterization of Rousseau and Nietzsche's rhetoric as "popular." I next discuss my choice to focus on compassion as the *pathos* of primary rhetorical import to Rousseau and Nietzsche, and then turn to elaborate further on the rhetorical significance of the autobiographical works. In the first three sections, then, I hope to show why these themes, as illuminated by these authors, are of continued relevance to us today. I then provide a brief overview of my approach, as it relates to existing literature, and a chapter overview.

I. Popular Rhetoric and Philosophy

The unifying theme of this study is rhetoric. I have chosen to characterize Rousseau and Nietzsche's rhetoric as "popular" because it seems to me that both philosophers write for a broad audience – which is also to say that they write for an increasingly democratic posterity. With his books, Rousseau sought to promote more democratic forms, while Nietzsche sought to undermine them, but both writers wrote in such a way as to ensure their places in an increasingly inclusive history. This means, for both of them, that they wrote with an eye to human passions and tastes that are shared in common. This is reflected in the forms of their works, as well as their content. In addition to discourses and treatises, Rousseau wrote an epistolary novel, the first *Bildungsroman,* and one of the very earliest autobiographical works. These popular works cover universal themes like love and education; Rousseau's autobiography famously contains scandalous passages detailing, among other things, his odd sexual tastes and exploits. Nietzsche may steer clear of such vulgar details as these, but he too writes in a more dramatic and broadly engaging style than most philosophers before or since. Though not exactly accessible in the manner of Rousseau's novels, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* for example, imitates biblical and tragic forms, and the *Antichrist* has a sensational quality that casts a broad net; while his works are ultimately very difficult to understand, they are overflowing with sharp observations that make them thrilling to read, even for the layperson.

What, then, are the intentions behind popular rhetoric thus conceived? These emerge more fully over the course of the study. But in the most general terms, Rousseau is concerned with dangers he sees emerging in the Enlightenment, chief among which include growing inequality, moral decay, and intellectual stagnation. His works seek to stave off some of these dangers – if only merely by providing a diversion from the onslaught of corruption. As I hope to sustain, Rousseau's works also hold out a promise

to more sophisticated readers of a radically new way of conceiving of happiness and living. Writing some hundred years later, Nietzsche is writing for an increasingly democratic Europe – partly, doubtless, due to the influence of Rousseau. His rhetoric is not meant so much to attract and influence a broad audience, as to reach out to that broad audience and achieve a more targeted and narrow recognition. His main concerns derive from a distrust of the homogenizing effects of democracy, and a worry about nihilism growing out of the dissolution of external forms of morality and authority. Stated crudely, the rhetoric of his works is all about achieving shock value in a world of stagnating public opinion and univocal morality (what Tocqueville called soft despotism, a faint reflection of which is today's political correctness). Nietzsche speaks outrageously, not necessarily because he believes what he says, but because he wants to be noticed for a long time to come.

When I speak of popular rhetoric, then, I do not mean that Rousseau and Nietzsche were working towards populist or democratic ends, or that they were even working primarily towards ameliorating the general understanding of their audience (in the sense of helping them understand the truth about the world). While these may have been their motives on some level, when I speak of popular rhetoric I mean this tendency in both Rousseau and Nietzsche to engage and provoke the passions, and their corresponding refusal to abide in dispassionate scholarly modes of discourse. I argue that even when they are at their most seemingly dispassionate, often Rousseau and Nietzsche are manipulating their readers in this way, and that good readers will necessarily have to be attentive to such sleights of hand. As such, popular rhetoric as I conceive of it is not necessarily a positive term, but rather should connote all the ambiguity that we tend to associate with propaganda and populism, and that the ancient political philosophers typically associated with democracy.

And if I am correct in suggesting that Rousseau and Nietzsche also thought of democracy, and their own rhetorical modes, with similar ambiguity, then this reveals important assumptions about how they understood their audience. The conscious employment of popular rhetoric implies that the majority of people are affected by passions in a powerful way. In the work of Rousseau and Nietzsche, I argue, it also implies that some people are less rational than others, that they are at an intellectual disadvantage in this (though not necessarily a moral one), and that these people are in the majority. In other words, the employment of what I am calling popular rhetoric rests on distinctly inegalitarian assumptions. Part of what I hope to show is that Rousseau and Nietzsche both use a gradated approach to their audience. Rousseau, for example, seeks to move an extensive crowd with his literature, while also hoping to seduce and educate a more select group of readers towards a more thorough understanding of his way of life. Nietzsche hopes to make a strong and immediate cultural impact, but he also states explicitly that he hopes to attract a more select group of readers who will understand him more fully, and, as "philosophers of the future," carry his project on into posterity. Both philosophers, I argue, write in a manner that is overtly manipulative, and often conflicts with our most beloved democratic principles, such as equality and personal autonomy.

For all the ambiguity inherent to the concept of popular rhetoric, however, I will also add that there is an important sense in which, for both philosophers, the term could refer to something positively democratic. While more conventional modern philosophers – from Locke down to contemporary chairs of philosophy – tend to write in a detached, formal manner that is specialized and exclusive, Rousseau and Nietzsche were both eager to break free of established forms and to reach out beyond traditional intellectual circles. Even among the French, known to this day for their colorful writing, Rousseau stands apart as a stylist capable of engaging the hearts and minds of whole generations. And in

terms of mastery of the written form, Nietzsche is arguably unsurpassed in his ability to attract and provoke readers through his own unique combination of literary elegance, drama, and wit. While neither philosopher was democratic in any simple sense, they did take pains to ensure that their works would reach out beyond the confines of establishment philosophy. This can be seen as a democratic gesture in the most important sense: by appealing to such a broad cross-section of readers (in the intellectually rich way they do), Rousseau and Nietzsche each serve in the vanguard of genuine free-thinking and intellectual pluralism.

II. Why Compassion?

Compassion is a fundamental psychological experience; it is a movement of the soul dependent on both the basic capacity to identify with another, and on the fact of human suffering. Whether we call it compassion, pity, sympathy, or empathy, all psychologically healthy human beings have experienced the pain of our fellows vicariously in this way.[2]

[2] Throughout this study, I will be using the terms pity and compassion interchangeably. I make this choice with some reservation since, at least in English today, there is some difference in nuance between 'pity' and 'compassion.' Specifically, the word 'pity' seems to encompass a wider range of meaning, which includes a negative dimension. It is sometimes viewed as colder and more distant, even to the extent of communicating a sense of contempt for the sufferer, whereas 'compassion' enjoys nearly unmixed positive connotations, and is often even referred to as a virtue. I also hesitate to draw a hard semantic line between the two terms, however, for a number of reasons. To start, I am skeptical that genuine pity can be characterized by genuine contempt, though it seems that one could feel a mix of pity and contempt. On the other hand, it seems to me that compassion, like pity, can be felt at a distance – on behalf of something or someone that one considers lower, and perhaps even accompanied by a hint of scorn. Thus, the meanings of the two words seem to overlap enough to justify using them as synonyms. It seems that both equally refer to a movement of the human psyche whereby one identifies with the suffering of another. I will also occasionally refer to sympathy and empathy as more or less synonymous terms for the same reason.

The more straightforward reason for my choosing to equate pity and compassion involves issues of translation. Neither Rousseau nor Nietzsche wrote in English, and they both wrote some time ago. Though the pity/compassion distinction exits in French, as does the divergence in meaning today, in Rousseau's time, and in his works, the words *compassion* and *pitié* meant more or less the same thing. In German, the problem does not exist, since for the most part *Mitleid* is used to denote to both pity and compassion. This is certainly the word that Nietzsche uses primarily. Though there are other related words—such as *Erbarmen*, which connotes mercy, and *Mitgefühl*, which connotes sympathy and commiseration—*Mitleid* covers the primary meanings of both pity and compassion.

Being such a basic element of human psychology, and because of the prominence of suffering in human life, compassion plays a significant role in our lives both as private individuals and as citizens. In private life it can be a powerful force that shapes the choices we make in our closest relationships and informs the goals that structure our personal fates. Compassion can also be seen as shaping the emotional foundation of political communities – as the key psychological element that unites individuals together into caring, public-spirited groups. In politics, our attitudes regarding pity and compassion get reflected in the institutions of government, throughout history and around the world today, and shape the broader expectations that citizens and individuals have of their regimes. In political science, the concern with compassion and pity is perhaps most obvious in our simple distinction between social democratic systems (more compassionate, less individualistic) and liberal democratic ones (less compassionate, more individualistic).

Rousseau and Nietzsche single out compassion as having an especially democratic quality – a quality that Rousseau uses to powerful effect, and which Nietzsche ruthlessly seeks to expose. Unlike other social passions, such as envy, resentment, arrogance, fear, love, and admiration, compassion is grounded on the equality born of our sensitivity to suffering. This makes compassion something unifying, that everyone can experience, and hence something that can be harnessed to mitigate against the harsh differences between people and classes that tend to cause social and political instability. Rousseau especially recognized that attentiveness to compassion can be cultivated to put a spotlight on the weak and vulnerable, and to spur on the fortunate and wealthy to action. Rousseau made his argument in reply to the somewhat cold and calculating philosophies of influential early modern political philosophers such as Hobbes and Locke. Unlike Hobbesian fear of violent death, or the Lockean concern for private

property, pity seems both to be grounded in, and to motivate, genuine altruism, and can thus be seen as providing a positive emotional foundation for the sacrifices required by political life. When compassion is taken seriously in this way, it can help to curb the selfish individualism, inequality, materialism, exploitation, and moral skepticism unleashed by the early moderns.

Echoes of the Rousseauian outlook are everywhere in our political culture. One indication of its impact is that for many today it seems reasonable to understand compassion not only as a foundation for political life, but also as a fitting end, or goal, for political action. Many individuals, as well as associations and political parties, dedicate themselves to alleviating the suffering of others. Bearing witness to much human suffering, and motivated by their own sense of compassion, they are moved in turn to try to make the whole more united and compassionate. This kind of thinking is present in the so-called bleeding-heart liberal who is, at least according to the stereotype, motivated by a vague desire to make the world a kinder place, especially for the most disadvantaged. Compassion's power as a motive for political action is ever-present in our media and public debates, and I would say that it has gone some way towards replacing traditional virtues such as piety, moderation, courage, justice and wisdom. Today, in addition to the bleeding-hearts, we are also graced with "compassionate conservatives," and even "empathetic judges." Whereas the traditional understanding is that there is a clash between Justice and Mercy, today we often assume that the two can exist in harmony. On the other hand, I would be remiss not to mention the persistent counter-voice of libertarian individualism in contemporary politics, evident today in the rise of "Tea Party" conservatism in the US.

The idea of compassion as a mainstream cultural aspiration is relatively new. As Clifford Orwin (1997) points out in his work on compassion, Christian charity long

antedates contemporary compassion, but it is largely a private and personal virtue, with other-worldly aims (p. 296). The ancient Greeks recognized compassion as somehow essential to public life – just think of Achilles and Priam – but they hesitated to identify it as a virtue, and ancient philosophers instead often treat it as a problematic, and potentially dangerous, passion. Precisely because we are so moved by compassion, it can easily be used as a tool of manipulation. Rousseau, I argue, was aware of this rhetorical power of compassion, and used passionate appeals throughout his writings as a means to his broader aims. Now, as compassion's place in contemporary society becomes more prominent, these more questionable aspects come into view. Today, the dangers of pity are vividly displayed on a daily basis by the amorphous 'mainstream media.' With its ability to communicate poignant visuals from all over the world at any given moment, the media brings us a constant stream of human suffering. And other less nebulous political actors make similar appeals to our compassion, with regular visits to the poor and unfortunate, and even writing memoirs about the painful experiences they have lived through themselves. Judging from even a quick survey of contemporary political culture in the West, it would seem that petitioning to the sense of pity is one of the surest ways to influence human action, and to foster a more compassionate society; and yet, one does not have to be a cynic to wonder whether assistance for the vulnerable and suffering is even the primary purpose of many such appeals. Appeals to sentiment can be employed effectively to all variety of ends other than a 'more caring' society, and reacting to such pleas unthinkingly can divert energies away from more genuine causes. There is the lurking danger that compassion can be employed as a political and rhetorical tool, for the sake of alternate ends.

Obviously, however, I do not mean to suggest that all ends besides that of a compassionate society are unworthy ones. In fact, it seems that a brief survey at the state

of contemporary media – with its barrage of emotional appeals and sensationalism – naturally leads us to question compassion as an end in itself. On the one hand, a thoughtful observer of the glut of sentiment in the media is bound at some point to be reminded that even the most compassionate action takes place in a world of finite means and therefore at bottom involves hard choices. Compassion as an end is severely limited in this way. On the other hand, the preponderance of stories about suffering in the media might lead us to wonder whether there isn't something amiss in such constant attention to 'bad news.' We are reminded that compassion, however 'good' an emotion it may be in some respects, is dependent upon human suffering and thus has an inherently negative core. And just as the evening news often tends to ignore 'good news,' there is a danger that the contemporary focus on compassion might divert energies away from, and eventually eclipse, other worthwhile ends.

Nietzsche would not be surprised by the increased role compassion has in our political culture, and throughout his writings he warns about these dangers – the manipulation through compassion, the difficulty posed by limited resources in a world of great hurt, and the rise of sensationalism in modern society. He singles out compassion as one of his great modern targets. While Rousseau encourages us to believe that pity can unite an entire community harmoniously, Nietzsche reminds us of the tensions that so often exist between various social and political ends. Both write in such a way as to guide the passions of the readers whose ideas they at the same time hope to shape. Together they can help us to grapple with this difficult question of how we, as individuals and citizens, relate to and deal with human suffering.

III. Why Autobiography?

It is not difficult to see why compassion is an important theme in Rousseau and Nietzsche, and should be of continued interest to us today insofar as it raises crucial ethical and political questions, and is so often employed as a rhetorical tool. But what of autobiography? If it is worth exploring how Rousseau and Nietzsche conceive of the modern soul in its relationship to suffering, what does this have to do with how they understood and represented themselves?

My work on the autobiographical writings of Rousseau and Nietzsche originated in observations concerning the extent to which their autobiographical writings exhibited important parallels to their more analytical works, and specifically how the autobiographical works related to their teachings on the passions. A major goal of this study is to demonstrate this considerable and interesting consistency within both authors' bodies of work. I argue that both Rousseau and Nietzsche wrote autobiographies – I deal mostly with the *Confessions* and *Ecce Homo* – that exemplify their respective philosophical teachings on compassion, which is to say that the autobiographical works employ personal rhetoric aimed at illuminating and reinforcing these teachings. As part of his broad endorsement of compassion, Rousseau plays the suffering victim in the *Confessions*. He elicits his readers' compassion with his constant laments, and hereby fosters compassion for the disenfranchised of the world (including, perhaps, eccentrics like himself). It is a maneuver that betrays a savvy thinker beneath the emotional surfaces. Nietzsche's autobiographical choices, I argue, are similarly shaped by his stance towards pity – in this case, his rejection of it. In *Ecce Homo,* Nietzsche astonishes us with a portrait of unremitting self-confidence and good cheer. Far from eliciting sympathy, he seeks to demonstrate his own excellence, consisting largely of his great capacity for life.

Both Rousseau and Nietzsche draw attention to themselves in their works, and not just in the autobiographies. But study of the autobiographies call attention to the lengths to which each of them went to ensure that they left a record of themselves, and the extent to which each of them attended to the rhetorical dimensions of their self-presentations. Rousseau and Nietzsche, I argue, were each deeply invested in the dimension of rhetoric that Aristotle calls *ethos,* such that their autobiographical works cannot help but remind us of the rhetorical relevance of character. In his book on the art of writing entitled *Style,* F.L. Lucas gives this thought contemporary expression:

> The beginning of style is character. […] The fundamental thing is *not* technique, useful though that may be; if a writer's personality repels, it will not avail to eschew split infinitives, to master the difference between 'that' and 'which,' to have Fowler's *Modern English Usage* by heart. Soul is more than syntax.[3]

Neither Rousseau or Nietzsche sought to establish themselves as upstanding in any ordinary sense, and much of what they both do in their autobiographical works consists of masquerade, but both did go to great lengths to draw attention to themselves, to establish some variety of personal credibility, and, ultimately, to ground their readers' trust. The necessity for such complicated personal reflections, I believe, grew in proportion to their grand ambitions. Rousseau had something like a cult following by the time of his death, and by the time of *Ecce Homo,* Nietzsche argued confidently that he would achieve such status in time. Though they approached the task differently, both Rousseau and Nietzsche saw that personal disclosure could help them to gain a broad readership, and help them to establish certain kinds of authorial authority. And they have both been relatively successful in this regard. Generations of readers have been able to feel that they know Rousseau and Nietzsche, or at least that they would like to come to know them, and this has doubtless contributed to their long-term popularity.

[3] Quoted by Epstein (2011, 2).

Reflecting closely on the rhetorical dimensions of Rousseau and Nietzsche's autobiographical works leads us beyond the question of their own particular philosophic endeavors, to our own contemporary circumstances. The specific qualities of their respective self-presentations, somewhat surprisingly, call attention to one problem in particular: the tension between democratic freedoms and authority. Rousseau notoriously critiques his philosophic contemporaries for their vanity and lack of decency, and yet, while also undermining the authority of the *ancien régime*, Rousseau surreptitiously reaches out to the masses as a new kind of cultural super-authority. How does Rousseau conceive of and resolve the paradox of his anti-authoritarian assertion of authority? For his part, Nietzsche flauntingly disregards any deference to democratic norms of personal autonomy and equality, boldly declaring himself super-qualified as an authority on all fronts, a divinity of world-historical proportions. In so doing, I argue, Nietzsche intentionally draws attention to modern democratic prejudices against claims to superiority and authority. Such prejudices are on display every day in our politics, where democratic politicians are under strain to prove themselves accomplished, but with the common touch; dignified, but also humble; fit to rule, and yet somehow on par with all the Ordinary Joes. As they hone their public images, the special challenge is not to look too sophisticated or aloof, too ignorant or average. In the meantime, democratic citizens struggle with questions about what should count as authoritative in an increasingly democratic world, and about what freedom might mean in an increasingly complex and alienating one.

Rousseau and Nietzsche are not strangers to these questions, which ultimately reflect still deeper concerns about the sources and foundations of human knowledge and action, and in an oblique way their mutual concern for autobiography points the way to a response. Rousseau's emphasis on himself anticipates the modern concern for the self 'as

such' as the basic object of philosophic concern, and Nietzsche's body of work, including the autobiography, is concerned to provide an explicit articulation of the creative human will as the ultimate measure of all things. Both philosophers, then, are interested in the modern project of psychology, and in exploring the possibilities and limits of the inward-regarding modern subject. They each demonstrate the potential power of the modern stance, while deepening our concerns about its ultimate adequacy. The autobiographical works, at once revelatory and obscure, help us to understand the heights and horrors of the modern psyche.

IV. Interpretive Approaches

It would be difficult to think of two thinkers whose works have inspired more diverse bodies of secondary literature, and in both instances the sheer quantity of material is also vast. This is largely due to the multiplicity of interests sustained by both, such that their works inspire students from a wide range of disciplines across the humanities and social sciences. Even beyond this, however, Rousseau and Nietzsche both occasion great disputes across interpretive spectrums within respective fields, which I take as partial evidence at least for the great complexity of their particular bodies of work. The staggering quantity and radical diversity of interpretations of Rousseau and Nietzsche is testament to the richness of their work. A lot of the secondary material on Rousseau and Nietzsche is excellent and worth careful attention, and I am sure that I have not been able to do it justice. Because of the volume of secondary literature and because this study is concerned with several different themes spanning numerous works, each with their own discrete area of scholarship, most of my discussion of the scholarly literature will occur at the outset of each chapter and in footnotes. That said, it is worth making a few comments

up front about my approach, and about how this study contributes to our understanding of the two philosophers.

In a way, the scholarship having to do with Rousseau and Nietzsche can be divided in a rather straightforward way: those who read them rhetorically, and those who do not. Of course there are then significant further distinctions to be made, but this initial difference is an important one, for all of the reasons that make a rhetorical piece of writing so different from a non-rhetorical one. If an interpreter holds that a piece is written with rhetorical purposes in mind, in addition to philosophic ones, then interpreting them accurately becomes a different activity, one that has to account for several layers of meaning. If Lincoln gives a certain kind of speech in the North and another in the South, is this due to opportunistic immoralism, thoughtless inconsistency, or to conscious rhetorical choices made for some respectable purpose? Ultimately we are each left to make our own judgments, and it is not difficult with the Lincoln example to see why such interpretive choices soon become fraught: those who credit him with sophisticated rhetorical skills in the service of highly ethical goals are themselves targeted as naïve idolaters; those who call him opportunistic are, depending on their reasons for the judgment, either labeled petty cynics or naïve idealists; those who think Lincoln was just thoughtless are accused of thoughtlessness themselves.

Similar controversies emerge in the interpretation of Rousseau and Nietzsche. Attributions of rhetorical – or ulterior, or esoteric – motives are controversial because they imply allegations of duplicity and dishonesty that make us uncomfortable, especially in an age committed to sincerity and authenticity, and to the ideal of individual agency. There are, furthermore, genuine pitfalls in any interpretive approach. Those who read these two philosophers rhetorically are in danger of over-interpretation, and of attributing their own ideas to the philosopher in question. If one can explain an apparent

contradiction in a work by attributing any given statement to covert motives, what is it that ultimately governs such judgments besides personal preference? How does it make sense to assume intention where there may only be human error and historical circumstance at work? On the other hand, those who refuse to see any such motives are in danger of underestimating the intricacy of the works at hand. Instead of recognizing the complex of motives governing the composition of a text, they will see only contradiction and error. As is obvious by now, I side with those who read the works of Rousseau and Nietzsche rhetorically. While I recognize the dangers inherent to such an approach, to me they are less troubling than the dangers of the non-rhetorical reading.

There are many scholars today, from a wide variety of theoretical schools, who share my interest in the rhetoric of Rousseau and Nietzsche. While much could be said about the various schools of interpretation here, I will keep my introductory remarks on the subject brief for several reasons. On the one hand, others have given in-depth and elegant accounts of why we should read the works of great philosophers with considerable attentiveness to various layers of meaning, and I do not have much to add to this general debate.[4] On the other, since my whole study is concerned with the question of Rousseau and Nietzsche's employment of rhetoric, my case for this way of reading will, I hope, emerge page by page. Furthermore, most people who spend their time with Rousseau and Nietzsche acknowledge that they deserve to be read very carefully, even if they do not themselves focus on rhetoric, and while interpretive debates can get heated, it is also important to acknowledge this broad area of intellectual agreement. Needless to say, those who do not focus on rhetoric nonetheless have contributed substantially to the

[4] Specific defenses of rhetorical readings of Rousseau and Nietzsche will be provided chapter by chapter. Craig (1996, xiii-xxxviii and 293-340) and Melzer (2007) each provide helpful general accounts of the esoteric tradition in political philosophy. See also Garsten's helpful article "The Rhetorical Revival in Political Theory" for an overview of recent developments in the study of rhetoric by contemporary theorists.

study of both authors, and my hope is that in the future fruitful exchanges between various schools of thought will become more common.

With this hope in mind, and to the extent that introductory remarks are in order, it is clear to me that the most persuasive arguments about how best to read Rousseau and Nietzsche come from Rousseau and Nietzsche. And it is indisputable that both philosophers indicate throughout their works that they take a lot of care with their writings, that they think a lot about different kinds of audiences and the kinds of communication warranted by each, that they considered themselves exceptionally wise and wrote with a view to minds of similar caliber, and that they therefore expect a lot from their readers.

Rousseau speaks of his "long-meditated" works (*Dialogues,* I.22), that are "profoundly thought out, forming a coherent system" (*Dialogues,* III.209). He speaks of audiences in terms of stark oppositions – for example, the wise as opposed to the common herd (*The Social Contract,* II.7), his true judges versus the vulgar readers (*Second Discourse,* 141), and the "philosophizing rabble" versus those "seized with an ardent desire to know" (*Second Discourse,* 210). He speaks of the difficulty of communication: "Wise men, if they try to speak their language to the common herd instead of its own, cannot possibly make themselves understood. There are a thousand kinds of ideas which it is impossible to translate into popular language" (*The Social Contract,* II.7; see also *Emile,* 321-323). The legislator must have recourse to persuasion, so as to constrain "without violence" and persuade "without convincing" (*The Social Contract,* II.7), while he himself does "not know the art of being clear for those who are not willing to be attentive" (*The Social Contract,* III.1). He advises good readers to consult their own judgment carefully in response to his works, and to examine the "dispositions of soul" into which they are placed, such that they might "penetrate through

to that [disposition] of the Author when he wrote them and the effect he proposed to produce" (*Dialogues*, III 209). Carefully composed arguments, due attention to the composition and needs of one's audience, and an ultimate defense of his own character or "disposition" as the touchstone of his philosophy: these are sure signs of an abiding concern for rhetoric.

Nietzsche is far more upfront about his writing schemes than Rousseau, but what he has to say contains echoes of what we just heard from Jean-Jacques. He speaks elaborately about the care he takes with his works, explaining that he writes like a good philologist: "it is a goldsmith's art and connoisseurship of the word which has nothing but delicate, cautious work to do and achieves nothing if it does not achieve it *lento*" (*Daybreak*, Preface 5). He speaks of readers in a variety of ways – of the hurried versus the contemplative, of "nobler spirits" versus "innocents, asses, and old maids of both sexes" (*Daybreak*, Preface 5), the profound versus the shallow (BGE 40), the simple versus the nuanced, and so forth. He is a famous lover of masks (BGE 40, 278), and, in accordance with his variegated audience, he too writes selectively: "the nobler spirits and tastes select their audience when they wish to communicate; and choosing that, one at the same time erects barriers against "the others"" (GS 381). While Rousseau has difficulty communicating to the inattentive, Nietzsche sometimes prefers not to be understood at all (see GS 381, and EH III.1). Even so, for his good readers, who "read [him] as good old philologists read their Horace" (EH III.5), he is full of advice. He declares himself "a teacher of slow reading" (D, Preface 5), and, in works spanning *Daybreak* to *Ecce Homo*, exhorts his readers to learn the art of reading him well:

> To be sure, one thing is necessary above all if one is to practice reading as an *art* in this way, something that has been unlearned most thoroughly nowadays – and therefore it will be some time before my writings are "readable" – something for which one has almost to

> be a cow, and in any case *not* a "modern man": *rumination*. (GM, P 8, see also *Daybreak* P 5, BGE 246)

Over a century later, these words are still humbling. And while I certainly strive to be like a ponderous cow, I can in no way claim to have ruminated sufficiently on Rousseau or Nietzsche to consider myself a reader to their taste. That said, I do think their respective remarks on writing and reading reveal genuine concern for the complexities of communication and the niceties of persuasion, and in this study I hope to shed further light on the rhetoric they employ pervasively in their works.

My work on the autobiographical writings will likely seem unorthodox even to those who are open to the rhetorical dimensions of Rousseau and Nietzsche's other texts. Straussians, for example, tend to focus on the political meaning of a given text, rather than on the historical circumstances of its composition, or the psychology of its author, and, with several notable exceptions, this leads to the general neglect of the autobiographical writings. While generally I think the focus on the text "in itself" is sensible, with Rousseau and Nietzsche, it can be problematic, since both of them emphasized not only the historical character of their writing, but also, through their autobiographical works, their own identities as human beings and philosophers. These identities are, admittedly, very strange, and the autobiographical texts of both men have often been understood, by commentators on all sides, as evidence of the psychological troubles attending their later productive years. This study seeks to show how the autobiographical works of both Rousseau and Nietzsche are written with clear rhetorical goals in mind, such that they should be seen as important and integrated parts of their respective persuasive endeavors.

In both cases my position is controversial, but for somewhat different reasons. There is a significant body of literature on Rousseau's life, and on the *Confessions* in particular, and much of it, I argue, has fallen prey to intentional rhetorical ploys on

Rousseau's part. Hence, my reading of Rousseau's autobiographical work radically questions much of what has been said of the personal aspects of his life and work. On the other hand, Nietzsche's autobiography, *Ecce Homo*, has been largely neglected by scholars until just recently; in a way they too have fallen prey to Nietzsche's peculiar autobiographical rhetoric, and to the general rhetorical intensity of his final works. *Ecce Homo* has generally been viewed with a great deal of skepticism because of its strange bombastic character, and Nietzsche's loss of sanity closely subsequent to its completion. As in the case of Rousseau, I argue that *Ecce Homo* exhibits considerable consistency with his other works, and that it is the result of conscious rhetorical choices that reflect important aspects of his philosophy. While many commentators defend the unity of Rousseau's philosophical "system," they often exclude the autobiographical works from this story; because of Nietzsche's cautious epistemology, and his open criticism of philosophic "systematizers," interpreters have often missed the extent to which his works are nonetheless interconnected and rigorously consistent. In both instances, my reading of the autobiographical works suggests a more unified vision on the part of each philosopher than is usually attributed to them.

V. Chapter Overview

This study consists of five chapters: the first two are devoted to Rousseau, the third to Nietzsche's evaluation of Rousseau, and the last two focus on Nietzsche. The following summary of their contents should help further to situate my work within current scholarly debates, and to clarify my approach to the theme of rhetoric.

In Chapter 1, I explore how Rousseau's teaching on compassion fits within his broader philosophical "system." Building on work by Arthur Melzer, Clifford Orwin,

Jonathan Marks, and others, I show just how thoroughly Rousseau understood the art of rhetoric, and how he employed his understanding of the ancient rhetorical categories of *pathos* and *logos* to surprising effect in his teaching on compassion. While the strict logic of these passages is often problematic, they nevertheless have real rhetorical power: readers tend to be persuaded by the arguments in the *Second Discourse*, for example, that pity is a significant attribute of natural man. By comparing the rhetorical account of compassion that Rousseau provides in the first part of the *Second Discourse* to the account he provides in the more obscure *Essay on the Origin of Languages*, however, we learn that pity is in fact not altogether natural, because it requires intellectual capacities that are not present by nature. In Rousseau's outlook, "natural" sentiment and "artificial" reason are in fact far more interdependent than they are typically taken to be. In the first chapter I also discuss how, surprisingly, the goal sought in the cultivation of Emile's sense of pity is not compassionate action on behalf of others, but rather an increase in his sense of self-sufficiency. This dimension of my reading is more radical than those of other commentators, and raises interesting possibilities about Rousseau's own private views about compassion. I conclude the chapter with some suggestions about how Rousseau employs the speech of the Savoyard Vicar to promote a philosophy of compassion and fellow-feeling. The character of the Vicar allows Rousseau to mask his own thoughts about the limits of a philosophy of compassion, and demonstrates that Rousseau understands the importance of *ethos*, or character, to rhetorical persuasion.

I turn in Chapter 2 to consider the peculiar rhetoric of Rousseau's own self-presentation, as it relates to his teachings on human sentiment and fellow-feeling. In it I argue that the rhetorical aspect of Rousseau's autobiographical writings has not been sufficiently acknowledged by leading Rousseau scholars today, despite Rousseau's explicit concern throughout the autobiographical works to establish his own good *ethos*,

and despite the fact that *pathos* is arguably the overwhelming feature of the works. In each of them, Rousseau makes reference within the first chapter to his long suffering and persecution, and it is not an exaggeration to say that Rousseau's autobiographical works make up a small cosmology revolving around his victimhood. While there is some very good work on Rousseau's life and autobiography, most notably by Maurice Cranston, Christopher Kelly, and Heinrich Meier, no one has thoroughly taken up the question of the rhetoric of the *Confessions*. My suggestion is that Rousseau's *pathos*-filled self-presentation intentionally highlights and privileges his experiences of pain and suffering, while rhetorically minimizing his pleasures and happiness. Relying mainly on a close reading of the *Confessions*, I argue that there is a real disjunction between the *pathos* of Rousseau's self-presentation and its underlying narrative or *logos*. I endeavor to demonstrate the systematic character of Rousseau's autobiographical dissembling and to shed light on his reasons for this complex approach. My suggestion is that Rousseau's self-presentation is largely ironic, which is a reading in keeping with recent work by Anne Chamayou on Rousseau's use of humor. Unlike Chamayou, however, I emphasize Rousseau's political motives, arguing that his irony serves to make himself (and others of his ilk) seem less powerful and subversive than he truly is, while at the same time cultivating a new kind of intellectual toleration among his readers. The argument of this chapter is consistent with work by Christopher Kelly and Heinrich Meier, but differs from theirs in highlighting the rhetoric of the *Confessions*; in so doing it challenges the orthodox biographical Rousseau scholarship, and draws attention to the tension between Rousseau's emphasis on authenticity and his simultaneous deceptiveness.

Chapter 3 deals with Nietzsche's treatment of Rousseau. I trace out Nietzsche's evolving evaluation of Rousseau, through all three periods of his productive years. In his scattered judgments of Rousseau, Nietzsche treats him as emblematic of the modern

democratic tendency. In particular, Nietzsche blames Rousseau for his manipulative rhetoric, arguing that Rousseau's powerful writing on behalf of the suffering masses ultimately contributed to the brutalities of the French Revolution. The critique of Rousseau becomes especially shrill in the later works. Despite this final barrage against Rousseau, however, the works of the middle period – especially *Daybreak* – offer a glimpse of Nietzsche's deep and nuanced respect for Rousseau. While other commentators suggest that Nietzsche hardly read Rousseau, my suggestion is that in *Daybreak* we are given evidence that Nietzsche read Rousseau's *Confessions,* and, more importantly, that he did so with real care and appreciation. The question that then arises is the following: If Nietzsche understood Rousseau's autobiography, and admired the man, why would he turn against him so fiercely in the final period? My suggestion is that Nietzsche's treatment of Rousseau offers us preliminary insights into the self-conscious and deliberate character of Nietzsche's own rhetorical endeavor. What makes Nietzsche's assessment of Rousseau so interesting, I argue, is that his main charge against Rousseau – namely, rhetorical and political imprudence – is a charge that is easily levied against him. While we admire Nietzsche's individual brilliance, we sense that his writings contributed to the rise of fascism. Understanding Nietzsche's assessment of Rousseau helps us to refine our judgments of both men.

In Chapter 4, I turn to discuss Nietzsche's self-presentation, contrasting it with that of Rousseau. The chapter consists of a careful examination of the rhetorical dimensions of *Ecce Homo*, which is Nietzsche's peculiar version of an autobiography, and the last of his published works. The work has been viewed with a great deal of skepticism in the past for a variety of reasons, including its complicated and controversial publication history. But foremost among the causes for concern is the book's *pathos*, which involves an unremitting megalomaniacal bravado. In a reversal of the Rousseauian

approach, Nietzsche employs an arresting rhetoric of competence, strength, and cheerfulness. While most commentators in the past have understood *Ecce Homo* as prefiguring Nietzsche's insanity, I argue that the bravado of the work is calculated and consistent with the rest of his late works, especially insofar as it provides a demonstration of the *pathos of distance* (Nietzsche's counter-*pathos* to modern compassion). Against thinkers like Daniel Conway who think the late works bespeak Nietzsche's growing isolation and frustration, I argue that *Ecce Homo* actually contributes substantially to our understanding of the motives behind the extreme rhetoric that characterizes works subsequent to and including *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, and which is especially evident in *Zarathustra* and the *Antichrist*. Understanding the nuances of Nietzsche's self-presentation, I argue, also helps us to understand his relationship to tragedy (and tragic pity), and to the character of Zarathustra. There has been a recent move to study *Ecce Homo* more seriously on the part of scholars such as Duncan Large and Sarah Kofman, and while my interpretation of the rhetoric of *Ecce Homo* differs from their understanding of the work in significant respects, it is part of a broader movement to defend the coherence of the late Nietzsche.

Chapter 5 is a treatment of Nietzsche's complex critique of pity. Like his critiques of Rousseau and of democracy, Nietzsche's critique of the "modern cult of pity and compassion" is rhetorically shrill and scattered throughout many works. I have boiled it down to the especially significant arguments, which, I argue, have a special cumulative effect rhetorically. The core of Nietzsche's critique of compassion is that it is an inherently negative emotion, since it is based on human suffering. While suffering as such is not good, it is an essential part of life. According to Nietzsche, a morality of compassion is problematic because it seeks to put an end to suffering, and this means reducing life to the most basic pleasure-seeking. Such a morality is powerful partly

because it is simple and easy to grasp; it is easily popularized, but ultimately threatens to sap the energy out of higher, more positive and self-fulfilling kinds of lives. Nietzsche, of course, does not present his critique so matter-of-factly. I argue that he presents the critique with such rhetorical excess as part of his calibrated effort to induce tragic fear and pity in his reader. While he scathingly critiques ordinary pity, and the morality of pity, he is also trying to recover a space for tragic pity within public culture. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the special pedagogical role that tragic pity has for Nietzsche. Unlike the morality of compassion, a tragic morality does not seek to end suffering, but rather acknowledges that it is often through suffering that we grow and learn.

By way of conclusion, I offer some summary reflections on the rhetorical endeavors of these two monumental modern thinkers. I discuss, from a comparative perspective, the political implications of their rhetoric, and the legacy of their respective emphasis on compassion and character as objects of philosophic investigation.

Chapter 1: Rousseau and Compassion

I. Rousseau's Break with Modernity: The Discourse on the Arts and Sciences

In Book VIII of his *Confessions,* Rousseau describes in vivid detail the epiphany that would forever alter the course of his life.[5] It is a terrific moment of philosophic drama that captures much of what is controversial in his thought. In 1949, already thirty-seven years old but as yet relatively unknown, Rousseau made near-daily trips to Vincennes to visit his good friend Diderot, who had been imprisoned by the French king for a controversial work that hinted at a materialistic understanding of the world (the "Letter on the Blind for the Use of Those Who See"). En route to one such visit, Rousseau came across the most recent essay competition question posed by the Academy of Dijon, concerning the moral consequences of the arts and sciences. According to Rousseau's later account, the question inspired a revolution in his thinking – a revolution that was soon inscribed in the prize-winning *First Discourse* (On the Sciences and the Arts), and which would inform the rest of his life's work. Prompted to consider the moral implications of the intellectualism of his age, Rousseau breaks with his contemporaries by declaring the arts and sciences generally bad for morality. The loyal Rousseau, visiting his imprisoned *philosophe* friend, would soon become renowned as an apostate of the Enlightenment and a defender of the common man; by many prominent thinkers of his day, he would be reviled for gross hypocrisy.[6]

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[5] *Confessions*, 293-297; see also the second *Letter to Malesherbes* (574-577 of Volume 5 of the *Collected Writings*).

[6] See Kelly's *Rousseau as Author* (2003) for the richest account of Rousseau's relationship to his contemporaries. A statement from Voltaire's letter to Rousseau of August 10, 1755 captures the general reaction among them to the *First Discourse*: "The arts nourish, cure, and console the soul; they serve you, *Monsieur*, even as you write against them: you are like Achilles, rising up against glory, and like Malebranche, whose brilliant imagination brought him to write against imagination."

The origins of the hypocrisy charge are not difficult to detect in the pages of the *First Discourse*, and the *First Discourse,* Rousseau also tells us, is the foundation upon which the rest of his paradoxical corpus is systematically built. While the purpose of this chapter is to trace and illuminate Rousseau's rhetorical *savoir-faire* through a detailed analysis of his treatment of compassion, before turning to the subject of rhetoric it is helpful to consider the parameters of the related debate surrounding the *First Discourse*. My intention is to show that what was often seen as hypocrisy in Rousseau's work is actually the consequence of his powerful but painstaking rhetoric. Seeing the polarities that inform Rousseau's arguments in the *First Discourse* will help us not only to understand the basic structure of some of his famous paradoxes, but also to see the corresponding dimensions of his rhetorical strategy.[7] The *First Discourse* contains an early articulation of some of Rousseau's characteristic claims, many of which have

[7] Interpreters fall into a variety of groups that correspond to particular views of Rousseau's paradoxes, system, and rhetoric**.** Peter Gay provides a helpful account of the early history of Rousseau scholarship in his 1954 introduction to the important book by Ernst Cassirer, *The Question of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*. Gay explains how early readers tended to pay less attention to the system of paradoxes, and similarly neglected the question of rhetoric, instead tending to favor one aspect of Rousseau's work at the expense of the rest. So, for example, scholars from the 18th Century up through Karl Popper would emphasize either the "individualist" Rousseau of the *Second Discourse*, or the "collectivist" Rousseau of the *Social Contract*, but would seldom work to reconcile the various dimensions of his thought (3-8). This soon led to a conception of Rousseau as essentially confused; Irving Babbitt's attack on Rousseau marks a low point in this direction (8-16). Cassirer, writing in the mid 20th Century along with Gustave Lanson and E.H. Wright, is one of the first to try to recover a unified understand of Rousseau's works. Today the trend is to take Rousseau's system seriously, thanks to the earlier writers just mentioned, as well as others like Leo Strauss, Allan Bloom, and Roger Masters, and more recent commentators like Benjamin Barber, Clifford Orwin, Christopher Kelly, Arthur Melzer, Tracy B. Strong, John T. Scott, and Jonathan Marks. There is still wide divergence on the overall substantive meaning of Rousseau's philosophizing and there is similarly a spectrum of opinion about the extent to which Rousseau wrote rhetorically. One essential disagreement concerns the extent to which Rousseau's paradoxes reflect tensions he sees as inhering in existence as such, or whether they rather reflect various layers of a complicated rhetorical project. The classic treatment of Rousseau's "system" is Arthur Melzer's book, *The Natural Goodness of Man: On the System of Rousseau's Thought* (1990). For a treatment of Rousseau's paradoxes, see Matthew Mendham's recent article, "Gentle Savages and Fierce Citizens Against Civilization: Unraveling Rousseau's Paradoxes" (2010). On Rousseau's rhetoric, see Heinrich Meier's 2010 essay on the *Rêveries*, Cohen (1953, 7), Emberley (1986, 299-301 and 324-329), Melzer (1990, 253-282), Orwin (1997, 296-315), and Marks (2005, 89-117).

become commonplace to us today, but it also contains some frank and surprising statements about his understanding of enlightenment. I will briefly look at both dimensions of the work in turn.

The bulk of the *First Discourse* consists of an extended attack on the notion that the restoration of the arts and sciences has contributed to a general improvement in the moral well-being of mankind. Rousseau makes a series of powerful arguments about the decline of virtue and rise of corruption that comes with enlightenment. Early on he highlights the difference between the appearance of virtue and its reality, arguing that, for all the finesse and refinement of 17th Century Europe, real virtue is in decline: sincere friendship, genuine patriotism, and religion have been replaced by festering hatreds and a dreadful urbanity (38). The general decline in morals is directly proportionate to the degree of civilization – "Our souls have been corrupted in proportion to the advancement of our sciences and arts toward perfection" (39) – and this is true historically wherever science flourishes (40). Rousseau offers a complex account of why this is: to form accurate judgments in the sciences and the arts, expertise is required, but, unlike in more straight-forward arenas like physical contests, such expertise is difficult to acquire and easy to mimic; as such, the sciences and the arts tend to trade in mistaken and vain evaluations. This contributes to the rise of decadent pursuits, especially the love of wealth (51). Eventually the corruption of popular tastes even turns back onto the individual artist, who "lower[s] his genius to the level of his time" (52-53). Ultimately, the rise of intellectual pursuits brings about disastrous inequalities, based on false evaluations of merit. Honor and wealth are bestowed on men of superficial talents over men of simple, natural virtue (58). The basic argument against the sciences and the arts in the *First Discourse,* then, is that they tend to corrupt true judgment and reward artifice and pretention. This is the Rousseau we all know and love.

There is another, more complicated dimension to the argument of the *First Discourse*, however. While Rousseau is willing generally to blame the arts and the sciences, he is far from making a blanket renouncement of them, nor does he advocate a return to simpler times. In fact, the arguments against the moral influence of the sciences is framed by, on the one hand, a glowing defense of the contemporary age over the medieval (scholastic) past, and, on the other, high praise for a certain contingent of intellectual exemplar. For all of its problems, modern enlightenment is infinitely preferable to the "barbarism" that recently plagued Europe (wherein "a nondescript scientific jargon, even more despicable than ignorance, had usurped the name of knowledge," 35). For all of his hatred of progress, Rousseau hates scholasticism more, and, by the end of the essay, it is evident that Rousseau objects not to the arts and sciences as such, but to their irresponsible employment. What he opposes is the indiscriminate promotion and advancement of the sciences, as well as their usurpation by religious authorities. He explicitly blames his contemporaries for failing to guard the "temples of the muses" responsibly from a "populace unworthy of approaching it" (62), and even expresses great hopes for the possibilities inhering in a new cohort of men of letters, potentially supported by the state, who might disseminate "throughout the human race not merely pleasant enlightenment, but also salutary teachings" (60). The *First Discourse,* then, represents a complex defense of everyday morality against the dangers, not of intellectualism per se, but of popularized, unrestrained, marketplace intellectualism, as well as the pseudo-scientific doctrines of the religious elite.

The *First Discourse* took aim at everything honored by Rousseau's age (and our own), in a fashion that appealed to common prejudices against intellectual sophistication, with the ultimate aim, however, of supporting a radically elitist vision of intellectual life that would contribute to society's well-being through a careful employment of

intellectual tools. It is not a contradictory argument, then, but it is complicated and paradoxical, and its two key dimensions – the attack on enlightenment and the embrace of an enlightened super-elite – are in obvious tension. Furthermore, Rousseau's argument could be seen as self-aggrandizing, and discriminatory against Rousseau's "elementary" contemporaries (62). As the epigraph to the work makes clear ("Here I am the barbarian because no one understands me"), even in 1749 Rousseau thinks of himself as a radical and alienated exception in the world: more like the great philosophers Cicero and Bacon, whom he praises in this context, than like his contemporaries. While Rousseau's elitism is easily lost in the current of his frequent grandiose and eloquent expressions of fellow-feeling and the basic commonality of mankind, it is out in the open in the *First Discourse*.

It is little wonder, then, that the *Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts* caused a great deal of controversy, launching Rousseau into a spotlight that only grew more intense over time. Against the protests of many of his erstwhile friends, Rousseau would eventually take on the grandiose task he assigns in the *First Discourse* to the true "disciples of nature" (62-63), working to raise monuments to the glory of the human intellect, and hereby "contributing by their influence to the happiness of the people to whom they will have taught wisdom' (63-64). Over the course of his many significant works, Rousseau's philosophy grows in its diversity of themes, but he persists with his tension-ridden, sophisticated defense of the simple pastoral life over the civilized, of decent natural man over corrupt civilized men, and of natural sentiments over corrupting thoughts. And while Rousseau would never abandon the basic paradoxes of his initial work, he would seldom again be so explicit about his rarified understanding of the proper

(narrow and elite) sphere of human knowing.[8] True to the thesis of the *First Discourse*, Rousseau's works seek to cultivate and buttress morality in society at large, and to defend morality against contemporary corruptions, while also seeking, much more discretely, to preserve a limited sphere for elite intellectual genius. In this study, I aim to show how Rousseau employs rhetoric to navigate these two divergent poles of his thought, within his popular and less popular works. In this chapter I focus on the relationship between *pathos* and *logos,* or sentiment and thought, in his works, using his teaching on compassion as my starting point; in the next chapter I turn to his use of rhetorical appeals to *pathos* and *ethos* (character), in the autobiographical works.

This chapter consists, then, of an analysis of the theme of compassion throughout some of Rousseau's major works. Rousseau's distinctive theory about the naturalness of human pity and its historical progression is a familiar one, for it is presented explicitly in the *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality* (*Second Discourse)*, one of his earliest and most influential works, and has also been the subject of much previous scholarly attention. The most thorough work on the this theme in Rousseau is by Clifford Orwin, Richard Boyd, and Jonathan Marks, who together have greatly clarified the subtleties and tensions in Rousseau's treatment of compassion, especially as it relates to contemporary democratic theory and practice.[9] The works of each of them have informed and refined my own understanding, and because I am treating passages from Rousseau in this chapter that have been considered by them, there are areas of overlapping insight that

[8] In the aftermath of *First Discourse,* Rousseau exchanged letters with his critics that elucidate his position still further, and he is also rather frank about his outlook in the "Preface to Narcissus" (also spurred by charges of hypocrisy).

[9] See especially Clifford Orwin's *Humanity and Justice: The Problem of Compassion in the Thought of Rousseau* (Dissertation, Harvard), "Compassion" (1980), and "Rousseau's Discovery of Political Compassion" (1997); Richard Boyd, "Pity's Pathologies Portrayed: Rousseau and the Limits of Democratic Compassion" (2004); Jonathan Marks, *Perfection and Disharmony in the Thought of Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (2005), "The Divine Instinct? Rousseau and Conscience" (2006), and "Rousseau's Discriminating Defense of Compassion" (2007).

I have tried to acknowledge whenever possible. That said, my own reading of Rousseau's teaching on compassion differs in significant respects from theirs.

I begin with a discussion of the background of Rousseau's teaching on compassion, which I argue is the work of Thomas Hobbes. I then turn to a careful unpacking of the three arguments for the naturalness of human compassion in the *Second Discourse*, supplemented by relevant passages from other works. This provides a solid foundational understanding with which to turn to the relevance of pity to some of Rousseau's broader purposes. What role does it play in the education of *Emile*, for example? And how might the teaching on pity be understood within the broader scheme of Rousseau's literary intentions? While other scholars each do an admirable job of demonstrating certain implications of Rousseau's teaching on compassion, much still remains to be said about the role that compassion plays rhetorically in Rousseau's corpus and pedagogy. In particular, my reading draws out the manipulative twofold character of Rousseau's teaching. The compassion teaching provides an especially vivid example of Rousseau's rhetorical ability to appear to endorse one thing using sentiment, while rationally demonstrating something else using arguments. My aim is to trace out exactly how Rousseau uses *pathos*-filled, rhetorical arguments to promote the embrace of sentiment on the part of society at large, while he at the same time employs arguments (*logos*) to convey another message intended for a narrower group of individual readers.[10]

[10]As will become clearer in what follows, the distinction between *pathos* and *logos* is somewhat artificial, since, in human affairs at least, there is rarely such a thing as pure sentiment, or pure argument. It is for this reason that, according to Aristotle, there is less certainty in ethics than in mathematics (see also, on this point, Lanson 1912, 25-26). Rhetoric is a study located right at the intersection of theoretical and practical concerns. As Christopher Kelly (1987) and John Scott (1997) have shown, in Rousseau's thought there is a scale running from the pure *pathos* of music, to the pure *logos* of abstract geometry and mathematics. Kelly demonstrates that Rousseau's employment of rhetoric is motivated in part by a concern that the modern neglect of rhetoric will undermine freedom. Against modern critics of rhetoric who would claim that it threatens individual autonomy, Kelly's Rousseau reminds us that the real alternative to rhetorical politics is not the Kingdom of Ends, *à la* Kant, but, rather, the force of tyrants (see especially 331-334). Rousseauian rhetoric occupies a middle ground between coercion and dialectical reasoning – it "persuades without

I argue that Rousseau's rhetorical approach, which perplexes while it propagandizes, is more polarized and polarizing than other commentators acknowledge. It calls attention to, and takes advantage of, the differentiated reasoning capacities of the human population. The general priority of feeling over reason in Rousseau's rhetoric matches the riddling priority of populism over elitism in the *First Discourse*, and calls attention to the gulf that exists between Rousseau's practical public teaching and his more individualistic private one, and between himself and his typical reader.

The most obvious objection to my interpretation of Rousseau's teaching on compassion, it seems to me, relates to the famous "Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar" in the *Emile*. My reading is in tension with the Vicar's moralizing, and if the Vicar speaks for Rousseau, my reading cannot hold. As such, I conclude the chapter with a discussion of the "Profession of Faith." I argue that the speech of the Vicar provides another vivid demonstration of Rousseau's rhetorical mastery – though unlike Rousseau, who tends to appeal to sentiment to buttress his arguments, Rousseau's Vicar uses *logos* on behalf of his sentimentalized philosophy. Rousseau's "Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar" is also relevant to this study in that it provides us with a preliminary example of the role of character, or *ethos,* in rhetorical persuasion, which is the subject of Chapter 2.

II. Rousseau Takes Aim (At Hobbes)

In the *First Discourse,* Rousseau provides a basic account of his critique of modern civilized life; in the *Second Discourse* he substantiates his critique with a fuller theory of human nature (Part I), and a more thorough exposition of the history of humanity's

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convincing." Scott makes a similar argument (see especially 820), but emphasizes the significant role of music in Rousseau's thought, and its relationship to language and the passions, and to politics.

political development and of the inequalities that have emerged therein (Part II). Rousseau's development of a theory of compassion emerges in the context of his discussion of natural man, towards the second half of the first part. It is not, however, as though Rousseau proceeds systematically through an account of the various sensory faculties and passions of natural man, like Hobbes, and then arrives at compassion. Instead, the arguments about compassion emerge in the context of a broader discussion of what he calls natural man's "metaphysical" state. Let me briefly outline how Rousseau proceeds to this point.

Much of Part I of the *Second Discourse* is devoted to defending the robust and self-sufficient physicality of savage man over and against enervated civilized man. When Rousseau turns to natural man's mental condition, as opposed to his physical one, he seems determined to distinguish himself from his materialistic modern forbears by referring to savage man's "metaphysical" condition. Having provided an appealing account of natural man's physical prowess, Rousseau turns to defend a seemingly high notion of man's natural metaphysical state: natural man is characterized by both 'freedom' and 'perfectibility' (114ff.). Rousseau does make it clear, however, that initially these two faculties are not at all developed. Savage man is "by nature committed to instinct alone, or rather compensated for the instinct he perhaps lacks by faculties capable of substituting for it at first, and then of raising him far above nature,[he] will therefore begin with purely animal functions" (115). Deprived of every kind of enlightenment, natural man can feel only the impulsion of nature, and not the freedom, ideas, or knowledge that lead to new passions and new degrees of perfection (116). While freedom and perfectibility, in addition to language (Rousseau's next subject), seem to be the defining faculties that separate men from the animals, to the extent that they are present at all, they are all only faint, nascent capacities among original men. Savage men

have a nascent capacity for choice (between flight and fight, for example, as opposed to more substantive moral freedom), but are almost completely driven by the instincts of nature; they are perfectible but not at all perfected; they have ideas of a sort (see 114, 123-125), but lack any real capacity for language or thought (see 115-116). At this point, Rousseau embarks on a long digression about the origin of language and knowledge, pointing to numerous difficulties pertaining to its development among the earliest men. Throughout the section, Rousseau's main object seems to be to demonstrate still further the serious limits of savage man's intellectual, or "metaphysical," capacities. Lacking community and the spur of necessity, nascent man has no cause to develop speech or reason, let alone to communicate accidental discoveries across generations; indeed, his needs are so modest that he has neither foresight nor curiosity (see 117-128). Increasingly, Rousseau's natural man comes to light as an intellectual non-entity: his mind is undifferentiated, stagnant, and basically unthinking. As such, I agree with Jonathan Marks' suggestion that we are not to take Rousseau's account of original man as representative of Rousseau's serious understanding of the natural (2002 and 2005). As Marks shows, the distinction between nature and history in the *Second Discourse* is ultimately unsustainable, since it is impossible to go back far enough to find man unaffected by history (see 2002, 485). I would also emphasize that Part I seems designed to illuminate specific theoretical problems with an individualist Hobbesian conception of nature, even while it openly criticizes Hobbes on his own terms.[11]

[11] See Plattner (1979) for a defense of the non-hypothetical character of Part I Rousseau's of the *First Discourse*. My main point of disagreement with Plattner concerns his major piece of evidence for the historicity of the strictly individualist state of nature, which is Rousseau's "footnote j." Plattner takes Rousseau's hint at a radical human experiment with Orangutans as an indication of the seriousness of Rousseau's empiricism, and while this seems right (to a degree at least – Rousseau's suggestion here is really so radical that it should probably also be taken as a joke), the empirical reality that the Orangutans exemplify is clearly social in character. Rousseau makes a point of describing how the orangutans collect around fires at night, hunt in groups, build dwellings, cling to their mothers, and bury their dead – all points which contrast to the original man of the hypothetical Part I.

The transition to the discussion of compassion occurs via the subject of savage man's happiness and goodness. Having just shown savage man's overwhelming ignorance, Rousseau proceeds to praise his ignorance of misery: in contrast to civilized man, savage man, with his peaceful heart and healthy body, is infinitely more contented with his lot (127). Rousseau concludes that men in the savage state, "not having among themselves any kind of moral relationship or known duties, could be neither good nor evil, and had neither vices not virtues" (128). "Above all," Rousseau warns, "let us not conclude with Hobbes that because man has no idea of goodness he is naturally evil" (128); the discussion of compassion emerges as a major piece of evidence against the Hobbesian understanding of natural man.[12]

In light of the specific character of Rousseau's defense of compassion, his specific accusation against Hobbes is worth reviewing here. Hobbes had surfaced as a target much earlier on in Part I, where Rousseau says: "Hobbes claims that man is naturally intrepid and seeks only to attack and fight" (107). This is a mistake, Rousseau now explains, because savage man is anything but intrepid. Hobbes wrongly considered natural man to be evil, for he failed to recognize that the vices attributable to man do not emerge outside of society. Hobbes "improperly included in the savage man's care of self-preservation the need to satisfy a multitude of passions which are the product of society" (129). As Rousseau has shown, man in the state of nature does not reason, nor does he abuse his faculties: "Thus one could say that savages are not evil precisely because they do not know what it is to be good; for it is neither the growth of enlightenment nor the restraint of law, but the calm of the passions and the ignorance of vice which prevent

[12] We should note that Hobbes never actually calls natural man evil, so this is an exaggeration on Rousseau's part. Gourevitch (1998) calls our attention to the fact that elsewhere Rousseau expresses a great deal of respect for Hobbes (p. 539), indicating perhaps that such seemingly earnest defamations are to be understood ironically. Hobbes is also in Rousseau's mind in the *First Discourse*, where, along with Spinoza, he is targeted explicitly (61).

them from doing evil" (130). Rousseau's main critique of Hobbes is that he attributed passions and faculties to savage man that only develop in society, and his reply is that nascent man is naturally ignorant and therefore innocent. Rousseau's second critique of Hobbes' outlook seems to conflict with the first. It is that the philosopher of the *Leviathan* failed to recognize man's natural faculty for one passion in particular – pity – which Rousseau now introduces with the following short encomium:

> [In addition to mankind's persistent ignorance,] there is, besides, another principle which Hobbes did not notice, and which – having been given to man in order to soften, under certain circumstances, the ferocity of his vanity or the desire for self-preservation before the birth of vanity – tempers the ardor he has for his own well-being by an innate repugnance to see his fellow-man suffer. (130)

Pity comes in to buttress to Rousseau's initial argument against Hobbes' (alleged) contention concerning the wickedness of man. Whereas Hobbes reduces pity to a vague sense of the fact that harm experienced by others might one day be felt by oneself (in *Leviathan*, I.6), Rousseau will speak of pity as one of the fundamental "principles" of natural man – one that is critical to understanding the peaceful, non-Hobbesian character of the Rousseauian state of nature.

The subsequent elaborate discussion of pity and defense of its naturalness is eloquent and forceful. The context of the discussion, however, gives us some reason to proceed with doubt regarding its forthrightness. We might wonder from the outset whether the account of natural pity will prove to be as ambiguous and problematic as the accounts of natural freedom, perfectibility, and language. Furthermore, in recognizing that Rousseau's teaching on pity in the *Second Discourse* is framed as a direct response to Hobbes, we have reason to suspect that the discussion contains a polemical dimension. And in light of Rousseau's specific critique of Hobbes – that he assumed too much of his savage man – we should wonder how and why he conceives of compassion as an

exception. The obvious question of how compassion can belong to primitive man, while language and "intrepidness" do not, reflects still deeper questions about the relationship between the physical and metaphysical dimensions of natural man, and the relationship among the intellectual faculties, the passions, and the senses. These questions persist throughout Rousseau's defense of the naturalness of compassion.

III. Rousseau's Defense of Compassion

Rousseau's overall defense of pity as a natural virtue in the *Second Discourse* consists of three arguments, and he outlines these before proceeding: first, Rousseau argues that pity is appropriate to beings "as weak and subject to as many ills as we are"; second, that it is a virtue that is universal and useful "because it precedes in him the use of all reflection"; and third, that it is "so natural that even beasts sometimes give perceptible signs of it" (130). He takes each of these arguments up at length, in reverse order. In what follows, I analyze each of the three arguments, in the light of insights gleaned from Rousseau's other major published works.

A. Our Primitive Origins

To begin, then, Rousseau considers the argument from origins; for Rousseau, in stark contrast to so many political philosophers before him, this means our animal origins (Orwin 1997, p. 1). The basic suggestion is that if animals exhibit some form of pity, then surely it can be considered natural. In particular, Rousseau argues that mothers have a tenderness for their young which makes them willing to face great perils in guarding them, that horses are loathe to 'trample a living body under foot,' and that often animals

seem disturbed by the deaths and corpses of members of their species (130). The weakness of this argument is present even in its initial formulation (cited above): the fact that beasts *sometimes* give indications of such sentiments is not good evidence for the universal naturalness required for the clean logical extension of the argument to humanity. The fact that Rousseau mentions cows in this context, which are domesticated herd animals, presents another difficulty; we might also wonder whether horses do not hesitate to trample on living beings more out of fear and skittishness than pity. Furthermore, to the extent that we *do* see horses acting out of pity, we can not help but wonder whether or not we are not engaged in anthropomorphism, rooted in our own (presumably) civilized perspective (see Boyd 2004, p. 529-531).

When Rousseau proceeds to articulate a more vivid example of natural compassion from Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees*, however, it is initially very persuasive. Rousseau explains that Mandeville departs from his customary style to offer us the following 'pathetic image':

> An imprisoned man sees outside a wild beast tearing a child from his mother's breast, breaking his weak limbs in his murderous teeth, and ripping apart with its claws the palpitating entrails of this child. What horrible agitation must be felt by the witness of an event in which he takes no personal interest! What anguish must he suffer at this sight, unable to bring help to the fainting mother or to the dying child. (131)

Doubtless the "horrible agitation" that this scene imparts on the imprisoned witness is meant to affect the reader here as well, who might 'feel' the psychological power of the example as evidence for the naturalness of human compassion. The problem, however, is that the example does not lend itself to Rousseau's account of *natural* man very well: it takes place in civilized society (the man is imprisoned), and any psychological power the example might exert on us individually must be seen in light of the fact, again, that as readers we are ourselves civilized beings, long having left the state of nature.

Furthermore, the behavior of the wild animal, in stark contrast to the merciful domesticated animals that supply his initial examples, betrays the mercilessness of nature, hereby refuting the very core of Rousseau's argument from origins.

Rousseau confirms our suspicions regarding the merciless character of his state of nature in footnote 'o.' There he states that men in the state of nature might be vicious and barbaric against one another, but explains that because these things are not experienced as injustice, they do not feel like suffering to such men, nor do they elicit pity:

> Men who know neither how to evaluate themselves nor compare themselves can do each other a great deal of violence when they derive some advantage from it, without ever offending one another. In a word, every man, seeing his fellow-men hardly otherwise than he would see animals of another species can carry off the prey of the weaker or relinquish his own to the stronger, without considering these plunderings as anything but natural events, without the slightest emotion of insolence or spite, and with no other passion than the sadness or joy of a good or bad outcome. (222)

A similar avowal is made in the passage of the *Essay on the Origin of Languages* (EOL) that deals with pity. There again, Rousseau attributes the "barbarity of the first men" to their ignorant inability to see beyond their immediate surroundings and to their corresponding undeveloped mental capacities: "Never having seen anything but what was around them, they did not know even that; they did not know themselves" (306). The state of nature, here seen exclusively at the familial stage that only comes later in the *Second Discourse*, is very much a mixed place, full of nascent passions and primordial brutality: "so much naturalness and so much inhumanity, ferocious morals and tender hearts, so much love for their family and aversion for their species" (306).[13] Whether he

[13] The relationship between the *Second Discourse* and the *EOL* has long been a subject of controversy (see Derrida 1974, p. 165-194, for a detailed account of the debate). The fact that Rousseau places the 'first men' of the *EOL* in a later stage of human development than the original state of nature in the *Second Discourse* is another reason to suppose that the latter account is meant hypothetically. Here the significant point, however, is that pity, even at a *later* stage than the one presented in the *Second Discourse*, did not exist in a meaningful way. The most helpful source on the question of the relationship between Rousseau's conception of history and nature that I know of is Jonathan Marks (2002, 2005).

is the solitary being of the *Second Discourse* or the family man of the *Essay on the Origin of Languages*, natural man is so brutish that his capacity for pity is almost non-existent – indeed, it seems to be less even than that of some domestic animals. The "naturalness" of the sentiment of pity, then, like the "naturalness" of human freedom and perfectibility, in no way contributes to its "natural" power.

This interpretation of the argument from origins is also subtly substantiated in *Emile*, the book within which Rousseau reveals a plan for the education of a natural man within the corrupt confines of modern society. Rousseau makes it clear there that Emile is in no way meant to be raised a brute, insofar as the education is a supremely artificial one: the good qualities of natural man are fostered, and the bad elements that multiply in the midst of society are thwarted with utmost deliberateness. As Marks (2002, 2005) argues, the carefully guided, artificial character of Emile's education provides a wealth of evidence for the supposition that Rousseau's understanding of "the natural" is in fact teleological in some way. Marks (2002) argues that nature provides guidelines, or at least limits, to human flourishing. He notes, for example, that Rousseau makes appeals to the genius of a person, or their character (p. 495-496).[14] The pervasive concern for the human good seems to me to legitimate Marks' suggestion that we distinguish between two meanings of the natural in Rousseau – that which is given by nature, and that which is "truly" natural, or good, according to our insights into human nature (2002, 490-491).

Emile's introduction to pity, or the "first relative sentiment which touches the human heart according to the order of nature" (222) is a critical moment in his education, one which sets the foundation for the later development of love and the other passions. This education in pity must take place at a very particular stage in his development in

[14] While this is an important qualification of those who would attribute to Rousseau a radically relativistic, pseudo-postmodern metaphysics (we see this in readers as diverse as Babbitt, Strauss, Strong, and Melzer), I would emphasize the role of human artifice in determining man's *telos* more than Marks does.

order for him even to be capable of feeling it: "if he had remained stupid and barbaric, he would not have them [the movements of pity within him]; if he were more learned, he would know their source" (222). While Rousseau's claims here about the interference of enlightenment with the sources of pity remains obscure to us at this point, this passage does make it clear that Emile, like natural man, must reach a certain stage in development to be ready for the relative sentiment of pity. It seems that pity, far from being a naturally strong characteristic in savage man, has a historical zenith, somewhere between man's barbarism and his enlightenment. And so man's capacity to feel pity may be something in his nature, but not if what is natural is defined as the given, or as what comes earliest in his development; the argument from origins is therefore inadequate.

B. The Primacy of Sentiment

The argument for pity's naturalness in the *Second Discourse* that takes its bearings in the animal world is ultimately unpersuasive, though this is not to say that pity is unnatural. Rousseau next turns, centrally, to the idea that pity – a 'pure movement of nature' – can be considered natural because it precedes all reflection. This seems to be the best of Rousseau's arguments – there is something so visceral about our capacity for pity that it seems right to call it innate – but it is also the most complicated, for it requires a careful consideration of his understanding of the relationship between reason and sentiment. Here too his examples take place within civil society. Rousseau makes expansive claims for pity, arguing that it is the quality from which flow the social virtues such as

generosity, clemency, humanity, benevolence, and friendship (131).[15] He also provides a rich, if somewhat hesitant, description of the operation of pity in the human psyche:

> Even should it be true that commiseration is only a sentiment that puts us in the position of him who suffers – a sentiment that is obscure and strong in savage man, developed but weak in civilized man – what would this idea matter to the truth of what I say, except to give it more force? In fact, commiseration will be all the more energetic as the observing animal identifies himself more intimately with the suffering animal. Now it is evident that this identification must have been infinitely closer in the state of nature than in the state of reasoning. (132)

This passage gives us some important information about Rousseau's understanding of the phenomenon of compassion. According to Rousseau's description here, it would seem that the main factor affecting the strength of pity in a given context is the similarity, and thus the equality (or perceived equality) of the individuals involved. Since men are far more equal in the state of nature, Rousseau suggests, pity is potentially 'stronger' there - in the sense, at least, that it is a generalized sentiment present throughout the whole species. It is also 'obscure,' at least according to the presentation here, presumably because it is a near-subconscious sentiment. The passage also calls into question the very thing it is trying to prove: *is* compassion merely a sentiment, or does it involve something more? Does it really precede reflection in the way Rousseau describes? As we have already seen, in the in the *Essay on the Origin on Languages* Rousseau is explicit that pity is actually very weak among the earliest men, precisely because the weakness of their *minds* prevents them from identifying with anything at all. How can the two accounts be consistent?

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[15] It is ultimately also arguably the fountainhead of conscience, justice, and even the general will in Rousseau's thought. For good accounts of how this works, see Orwin (1997, 300-308; on pity's relationship to anger and indignation, see 1980, 325), Marks (on pity's relationship to gratitude, benevolence, and conscience in the *Emile*, see 2006 579-581; on its relationship to gratitude, friendship, and contracts, see 2007, 731-739), and Scott (1997, 809-812, 822-824). We should note here that the ultimate source of compassion can be traced to self-love (see *Emile* 220-223; Melzer 1980, 1018; Scott 1997, 810; Orwin 1997, 299; Marks 2007, 728).

Once again, the examples in the *Second Discourse* illuminate that which Rousseau's argument conceals. But before turning to them, it is helpful to turn to *Emile*, where, as we have already briefly seen, Rousseau suggests that learning undermines the sources of pity's power. There, Rousseau also further delineates the internal psychological structure of pity, going so far as to boil it down into three "precise, clear, and easy to grasp" maxims (223; see also Orwin 1997, 303-305). The first maxim suggests that we only feel pity for those who are more pitiable than we are (223; it also declares that we are unable to put ourselves in the position of those happier than ourselves), the second states that we only pity ills from which we do not consider ourselves exempt, and the third that the strength of our pity will be commensurate with the perceived sensibility of the sufferer (224-225). While the description of compassion in the *Second Discourse* emphasizes the power of the sentiment among equals who identify with one-another in the state of nature, the maxims of *Emile* show just how contingent human pity becomes in the social world. Pity is what we feel when we see a being who is in a lesser condition suffer something which we think we might ourselves one day suffer, and we feel it only to the extent that we think they are being affected. In *Emile*, where the discussion is less overtly political, it also becomes almost Hobbesian; the sentiment of pity might emerge universally by nature, and even take priority over reason in most people, but to see it rationally parsed in this way is to begin to see the limits of its universal power.

Indeed, the maxims of *Emile* point to some of the real limits of compassion as a political tool. These are explored at length by Richard Boyd (2004), who emphasizes the role of difference and separation in Rousseau's psychology of compassion. According to Boyd, suffering threatens to become a spectator sport in Rousseau's world, and this possibility undermines Rousseau's endorsement of compassion; Orwin raises similar

concerns, pointing in an especially helpful way to the tensions between compassion and justice (see 1980, 324-327 and 1997, 307-315). As is clear in what follows, I agree that Rousseau's account of compassion has radical elements that call into question his and our ordinary understanding of compassion. I differ in my understanding of the implications of these complications for Rousseau's various readers, and would also call attention to arguments made by Marks (2005 and 2007), who is more attentive to the genuinely positive and active role that pity plays in the education and life of *Emile*. My own reading suggests that the positive, action-inducing teaching on pity is meant more for the general reader, and that, while Rousseau invites the kinds of debunking insights of a Boyd and Orwin on the part of his more sophisticated readers, properly understood such insights need not be politically disruptive or counter-productive. And so, while Rousseau contends that knowing the sources of human pity undermines its power, and even demonstrates this truth with his maxims, he writes in such a way that these insights are easily missed in the course of his sweeping promotion of natural compassion.

The insights of the *Emile* surface gradually over the course of an examination of the examples of the *Second Discourse*. The examples are overtly meant to show that compassion precedes reason, but what Rousseau actually provides is an implicit demonstration of how civilization refines, modifies, and weakens the general, broad capacity for pity that belongs to natural man.

The first example is the theatre, which, though obviously a case from civilized life, Rousseau manages to subvert for his purposes by suggesting that even in the depravity of society men are moved by sufferings on stage. In other words, Rousseau argues, pity must be a pre-rational natural quality because even in the most artificial of settings men are still moved by it. This already problematic argument is further complicated by the specific examples of Sulla and Alexander of Pherae. The former was

a tyrant moved by sufferings he did not cause, and the latter was very much moved by the artificial sufferings of Andromache and Priam on stage; neither were at all affected by the sufferings they had imposed on their own people.[16] These examples serve to highlight the role of relative equality in the operation of pity as they are articulated in the maxims of *Emile*. Though the examples are rhetorically intended to show that even tyrants are affected in some ways by pity, they also illustrate the degree to which some men feel themselves to be so different from some sufferers as to remain unaffected. Thus the examples serve as an indication of the weakness of pity in civil society broadly speaking, but its real intensity within certain rarified circumstances and relationships. The implicit suggestion is that, as people become more unequal, the conditions requisite for the flourishing of generalized compassion become less commonplace.

Rousseau's final example here brings us back to the essential question of the relationship between pity and reflection; it too operates in the negative. If Sulla and Alexander represent points on a trajectory by which civilization enervates the capacity for pity by cultivating reason, Rousseau identifies the philosopher as the culmination of this movement. While Sulla and Alexander retained some capacity for a certain kind of pity, the reasoner or philosopher (or *philosophe*) comes across as especially harsh:

> Philosophy isolates him; because of it he says in secret, at the sight of a suffering man: Perish if you will, I am safe. No longer can anything except dangers to the entire society trouble the tranquil sleep of the philosopher and tear him from his bed. His fellow-man can be murdered with impunity right under his window; he has only to put his hands over his ears and argue with himself a bit to prevent nature, which revolts within him, from identifying him with the man who is being assassinated. Savage man does not have this

[16] In the *Letter to D'Alembert,* Rousseau is even harsher about the nature of the pity that is felt in the theatre, arguing that it is "a fleeting and vain emotion which lasts no longer than the illusion which produced it; a vestige of natural sentiment soon stifled by the passions; a sterile pity which feeds on a few tears and which has never produced the slightest act of humanity" (24; see also Marks 2007, 729 and Boyd 2004, 527-528). On the other hand, Rousseau himself greatly enjoyed the theatre, and he wrote novels that also indulge fleeting forms of compassion. On the significant differences between the theatre and novels – especially with respect to their provocation of vanity – see Kelly (1999).

> admirable talent, and for want of wisdom and reason he is always seen heedlessly yielding to the first sentiment of humanity. (132)

This certainly has the tone of an indictment of the philosopher, and clearly suggests that at the extreme the development of human reason results in a diminishment of pity, if not in its complete overcoming.[17] Where nature identifies with the sufferer, the philosopher can suppress his natural fellow-feeling in the name of personal safety. On the other hand, the philosopher's vice is strictly passive, and, according to Rousseau, the philosopher (in distinction to Sulla and Alexander) is still moved for the sake of society in general. Despite being unmoved by individual suffering, his imagination may nevertheless help him attain the broadened sense of pity that Rousseau unconvincingly attributes to natural man.[18] Indeed, depending on one's perspective, the end of the passage can be read as reflecting sarcastic disgust with the illuminati, or as betraying a certain level of ironic disdain for savage man's lack of prudence. What seems clear, however, is that *nature* strives for identification with the suffering other; the prudence of the philosopher might qualify as a virtue to some, but it is also the definition of the isolated, artificial individual. Nature, Rousseau hopes to have shown, leads men to identify with one another, and society, paradoxically, makes him increasingly capable of withdrawing.

This presentation of an overarching tension between reason and pity would perhaps seem unproblematic were it not so plainly challenged elsewhere. In an earlier passage from the *Second Discourse,* speaking of the passions in general rather than of compassion in particular, Rousseau says the following:

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[17] In *The Confessions,* Rousseau laments that he ever wrote this passage, blaming the "harsh tone and dark air" of his writings of this period on the influence of Diderot (326).

[18] A broad sense of pity directed towards the whole of humanity involves a different kind of rationality than the more acute individualized pity of civilized man. It is certainly far from the capacities of primitive man, who "judged things only on first sight": "Every general idea is purely intellectual; if imagination is the least involved, the idea immediately becomes particular" (*Second Discourse,* 124-125).

> Whatever the moralists may say about it, human understanding owes much to the passions, which by common agreement also owe much to it. It is by their activity that our reason is perfected; we seek to know only because we desire to have pleasure; and it is impossible to conceive why one who had neither desires nor fears would go to the trouble of reasoning. The passions in turn derive their origin from our needs, and their progress from our knowledge. (116)

This passage clearly calls into question the idea that compassion is something strictly pre-rational, by bringing out the interdependence of the passions and human understanding (see Marks 2007, 736; Orwin 1997, 300): these are discrete entities only in speech.

In the *Essay on the Origin of Languages*, Rousseau makes it clear that compassion is no exception to this general understanding of knowledge, the passions, and human need. As we have briefly seen above, there Rousseau explains how pity is impossible without the capacity for reflection. For it fully to emerge as a passion of any power, pity requires comparisons, and this requires reason: "The social affections develop in us only alongside our *lumières*. Pity, though natural in the heart of man, will remain eternally inactive without the imagination that sets it in play. […] He who imagines nothing feels only himself; he is alone in the midst of mankind" (306). Again, the emphasis is on the symbiosis of reason and the sentiments: Rousseau's argument that pity's naturalness lies in its being prior to reason comes to light as disingenuous.

In the *EOL,* Rousseau also gives us a vivid account of how precisely the capacity for pity emerges alongside the rational faculties. The passage is worth quoting at length, especially insofar as it clarifies aspects of the psychological structure of pity that are submerged in the defense of compassion that we find in the *Discourse on Inequality*:

> How is it that we allow ourselves to be roused to pity? By transporting ourselves outside of ourselves; by identifying ourselves with the suffering being. We suffer only as much as we judge he suffers; it is not in ourselves, it is in him that we suffer. Consider how much this transport presupposes acquired knowledge! How could I imagine evils of which I have no idea? How would I suffer in seeing someone else suffer if I do not even know that he is suffering, if I do not know what he and I have in common? He who has never reflected cannot be clement or just, or pitying – no more than he can be wicked and vindictive. (306)

Here Rousseau is altogether explicit about the extent to which reason and the sentiment of compassion are intertwined in human psychology. There is no separating compassion from the rational faculty of identification, and in this, Rousseau explains, it is not so different from justice or mercy, or even from wickedness and vindictiveness. In the context of the *Essay on Languages,* this last suggestion is not so remarkable, but recall that the whole discussion of compassion in the *Second Discourse* emerges as a counter-argument to Hobbes' claim that man is naturally wicked and conniving. Here we see that Rousseau's own argument for compassion's naturalness is subject to the same critique he levels against Hobbes. Compassion, properly understood, is the product of society, and hence cannot be understood as simply natural. Rousseau's account in the *Second Discourse* is not contradictory in the strict sense, since it is upfront about the primitiveness of Rousseau's original man, about the "obscurity" of his capacity for compassion, and even about the hypothetical character of his state of nature (see Plattner, 18-25). But it is profoundly misleading.

Why is Rousseau's treatment of compassion in the *Second Discourse* so convoluted? A return to the example of the aloof philosopher can help us to understand what he obscures with his approach. My suggestion is as follows. In the *Second Discourse,* Rousseau emphasizes the sentimental dimension of compassion, and in the *EOL*, he emphasizes the role played by the imagination in the identification with the other. What he obscures in both accounts is the way in which the act of comparison inherent to pity involves two distinct motions: it first brings us outside of ourselves, and then, as in the hyper-rational philosopher, brings us back upon our individuated, separate selves. This thought is vaguely present in the following abstract account of the role that comparison plays in intellectual development, also from the *Essay on Languages*:

> Reflection is born of compared ideas, and it is the multiplicity of ideas that leads to their comparison. He who sees only a single object has no comparison to make. He who sees from his childhood only a small number and always the same ones still does not compare them, because the habit of seeing them deprives him of the attention needed to examine them; but as a new object strikes us, we want to know it, we look for relations between it and those we do know; it is in this way that we learn to consider what is before our eyes and how what is foreign to us leads us to examine what touches us. (306)

Comparisons, which are a constitutive element of all social affections, contribute to our thinking, but such thinking ultimately brings us back to ourselves: curiosity brings us to consider objects outside of ourselves, but then in turn "leads us to examine what touches us." The thinking that facilitates genuine identification with another in compassion also facilitates our turning away from the other and back to ourselves. As we saw with the maxims of *Emile*, the sentiment that attends such a comparative thought is itself highly contingent. Pity is arguably just one of the possible results of such comparative thoughts; envy or *amour-propre* might be others; self-love might be still another. The cold calculative prudence of Rousseau's philosopher provides a vivid demonstration of yet another potential outcome: deliberate indifference.

Several commentators have suggested that this obscured aspect of Rousseau's compassion teaching undermines the whole endeavor of political compassion, since it reveals a weakness at the psychological core of compassion. Richard Boyd, for example, asks whether we can ever escape the fact that our compassion for another ultimately brings us back to ourselves and our differences. He contends that, to Rousseau, compassion always involves a twofold movement: "Even if the initial recognition of another reveals the universal sympathy we all show as sensible beings, the next and inevitable recognition must be that everything else that constitutes the self is conventional, particular, and alien" (536). In a related vein, Clifford Orwin suggests that the strength of compassion in the savage state is tied to the absence of reason, which makes him unable to "disengage himself from his identification with his suffering fellow"

(1997, 300); Orwin argues that compassion is stronger absolutely in society because of the presence of reason and imagination, but suggests that it becomes relatively weak because "this same development has fed the passions with which compassion must compete" (1997, 301). While I agree with certain aspects of both Boyd and Orwin's understanding of these points, I differ on some details that have important implications for how we understand Rousseau's psychology.

First of all, while both Boyd and Orwin emphasize the role that reason plays in our "disengagement" with the suffering other, it is important to recognize that in Rousseau's understanding neither engagement nor disengagement with the other is possible without reason and imagination: savage man's compassion is "obscure" because, without reason, he does not really have it at all. In a similar vein, Rousseau never insists that the second part of the psychological movement – disengagement – is equally part of everyone's conscious or "inevitable" experience of compassion, as Boyd contends. Compassion is not therefore as inherently weak as Boyd suggests. Indeed, it is unclear whether the second part of Rousseauian pity is even part of what we mean when we ordinarily speak of pity, and Rousseau, I think, is aware of this tension in his account. Rousseau's intricate presentation of compassion rather indicates that, at least in the context of his own historical situation, it was better to exaggerate the socially beneficial aspects of social sentiments than to risk undermining them with a too-honest exposition of their complicated, contingent, and potentially immoral, dimensions. As we will see in the next section, Rousseau's rhetorical choice to obscure the two-fold role of reason in compassion stems from a belief that, far from simply undermining compassion, reason can also be put in the service of cultivating and preserving it.

Finally, while it seems right that, according to Rousseau's account, other social sentiments come to interfere with compassion's natural power, this alone does not

account for the weakness of compassion in the civil state. The more essential explanation, I think, especially in the context of the *Discourse on Inequality*, is the relative equality of individuals in the state of nature and their inequality in the civilized state. Formally speaking, equality fuels compassion's liveliness, and inequality undermines it because it narrows the scope of shared experience. And so, where Orwin emphasizes competition between passions as the cause of pity's weakness in the civil state, I think Rousseau's deeper argument concerns inequality.[19] While the two positions are not mutually exclusive, since competing social passions certainly contribute to the inequalities of the social state, inequality itself is the prime target of Rousseau's compassion teaching. In other words, he does not promote compassion because it is in any absolute sense superior to the other passions like envy or *amour-propre*, but because it can be more readily put in the service of egalitarian politics than those social passions where the recognition of difference is primary.

C. Utility

Rousseau's final argument in the *Second Discourse* for the naturalness of human pity is logically problematic, but helpful for formulating a preliminary conception of Rousseau's broader purposes with respect to his teaching on pity. The final argument is, essentially, that pity is natural because it is so badly needed. The first formulation of the argument is that pity is appropriate to beings "as weak and subject to as many ills as we are," and the discussion of this point ironically takes the form of a rather Hobbesian – in the sense of

[19] Here, then, the example of Alexander of Pherae is helpful. Orwin would be right to say that Alexander is indifferent to his subjects' suffering and sympathetic to those of Andromache and Priam because in reality he is put upon by political concerns that compete for his attention, while in the theatre he is released from such worries and free to identify with those on stage. On the other hand, Andromache and Priam are high royalty, and it is difficult to imagine him being moved, say, by the plight of a Cossette, even on the stage.

putting the cart before the horse – presentation of the importance of pity to the preservation of the species. Rousseau turns to this final argument subsequent to a brief mention of street riots in which only "the rabble, the marketwomen, separate the combatants and prevent honest people from murdering one another"; on the heels of this statement he proceeds to claim that "it is very certain, *therefore*, that pity is a natural sentiment which, moderating in each individual the activity of love of oneself, contributes to the mutual preservation of the entire species" (emphasis added, 133). Rousseau argues that this sentiment, like the Lockean law of nature, makes the state of nature peaceful: "in the state of nature, it takes the place of laws, morals, and virtue, with the advantage that no one is tempted to disobey its gentle voice" (133).

Despite this praise, Rousseau soon gives some indication of the limits of this "gentle voice": "it will dissuade every *robust* savage from robbing a *weak* child or an *infirm* old man of his hard-won subsistence *if* he himself hopes to be able to find his own elsewhere" (emphasis added, 133). Rousseau supplements these hard thoughts with his very own modern maxim of nature: "*do what is good for you with the least possible harm to others*" (133).[20] And it becomes clear over the subsequent pages of the *Second Discourse* (where we see the emergence of the violent passions, such as love, and the need for laws) that, whatever peace ever exists in the state of nature, it is fleeting and fragile once certain needs are felt and the transition to social and political life begins. Soon much more dangerous passions emerge, especially love and *amour-propre*; a drastic increase in human inequality brings a decrease in the original power of pity to unite men. This problem is only compounded in civilized society. Because civilized life is

[20] Hobbes states his version of this law of nature purely in the negative ("Do not that to another, which thou wouldest not have done to thy selfe," *Leviathan*, 1.15.35), whereas Locke's formulation is the inverse of Rousseau's ("when his own Preservation comes not in competition, ought he, as much as he can, to preserve the rest of mankind," *Second Treatise*, 2.6). Ironically, Rousseau's version is the one which seems to gives the most prerogative to the individual.

characterized by elaborate modes of dissembling and sophistry, people's judgments of one another are often entirely misinformed (155-156). Man's natural pity is soon stifled and replaced with avariciousness, ambition, and evil (157), and experience of such corrupt social reality leads to further distrust, alienation, and competitiveness, to the point where some men are only happy to the extent that others are miserable (see 174-175). According to Rousseau, the inequalities of modern life are not only extensive, but often have false foundations that make the divisions all the more volatile. The inequalities and accompanying pretensions devastate the bonds of sympathy that unite society, and also threaten individuals within it. Modernity has within it the seeds for very great inhumanity, making universal pity all the more needful, despite being all the more remote. If Rousseau can bring about a greater capacity for compassion, this could psychologically prepare the way for greater equality (which in turn legitimates the idea of the general will, and facilitates popularly enacted rule of law).

Rousseau's sympathetic treatment of pity in the *Second Discourse* can be seen as necessary, but the strict *logos* of the discussion is flawed. Pity is not as prominent a feature of the natural world as Rousseau pretends, nor is sentiment prior to thinking in as straight-forward a way as he suggests. Finally, the suggestion that pity would be appropriate for needy early human beings is no argument at all for its naturalness – at least, again, if we understand naturalness to mean what is given by nature, as opposed to what is given by human history and artifice. And yet, despite their manifold problems, Rousseau's arguments do have a real persuasive power. He is able to invoke the passions of his reader, thus showing, almost in spite of the arguments, that there is something to his suggestion that compassion is "in us." Human history and nature may have put it there, but Rousseau is able to enliven it through his vivid examples and passionate speech. To the extent that Rousseau's arguments are successful, it is due, on the one

hand, to the fact that reason and sentiments are woven together in human speech, and, on the other, to the fact that most people *do* in fact 'feel' at least as powerfully as they reason. Where Rousseau's arguments for pity are concerned, the power of people's feelings have more than compensated for the limits of his reasoning.[21] Rousseau himself alludes to his reliance on this aspect of human nature when he concludes his discussion of compassion as follows: "It is in this natural sentiment, rather than in subtle arguments, that we must seek the cause of the repugnance every man would feel in doing evil, even independently of the maxims of education" (133).

As I have endeavored to show, it is a subtle combination of sentiment and argument that operates in this section of the *Second Discourse.* What we come away with is a powerful account of how pity operates in the psyche, of how closely it is connected to equality, and of its dual relationship to reason through the mental processes of identification and individuation. We also gain a vantage point from which to consider further why Rousseau may have found it important to incorporate such a teaching into his philosophic system. The argument from utility, or human need, suggests that compassion is good for human beings in general (or in the majority), and Rousseau's account of the development of human society shows us why actively fostering it may be especially important in times of growing inequality. Rousseau may exaggerate the degree of decrepitude in modern society, but one aspect of his contribution to the solution – the promotion of compassion through a complex naturalistic rhetoric, combined with a pervasive attack on reason – is perfectly clear.

The fact that Rousseau accomplishes this through pseudo-rationalistic means is not lost on him, and he does not fail, in due course of the *Second Discourse*, to

[21] On Rousseau's sense of the limits of common reason, see the *Letter to Franquières* [2] *OC* IV, 1134 (quoted in Gourevitch 1998, 538-539).

rehabilitate the image of the philosopher that is left so tarnished by the discussion of compassion. While in Part I we glimpse how the philosopher's reason allows him to live detached from the sufferings of the world, we learn in Part II of another kind of reasoner: in developed society, Rousseau teaches, natural commiseration, "no longer dwells in any but a few great cosmopolitan souls, who surmount the imaginary barriers that separate peoples and who, following the example of the sovereign Being who created them, include the whole human race in their benevolence" (160). Just as utility and need ultimately spur innovation and an "almost unlimited" perfectibility in the state of nature (114-116), the needs of society inspire the benevolence of the ever-modest Rousseau, whose rational and rhetorical powers extend beyond particular concerns, and target the needs of humanity as such.[22] It so happens, then, that natural man is so intellectually and emotionally limited that he is utterly incapable of *truly* natural commiseration, which dwells only in a few "great cosmopolitan souls" reminiscent of the *First Discourse*. What is truly natural comes about only with through the active interventions of the human mind.

IV. The Rhetoric of Sentiment in *Emile*

Rousseau argues for the necessity and instrumental goodness of pity far more than he persuades the careful reader of its natural power in the state of nature. Given the logical weakness of the arguments discussed above, in combination with the early indications

[22] In the *Confessions*, Rousseau describes the composition of the *Second Discourse* as follows: "Exalted by these sublime contemplations, my soul raised itself close to the divinity, and from there seeing my fellows follow in the blind route of their prejudices, errors, misfortunes, crimes, I cried out to them in a feeble voice which they could not hear, "Madmen, who moan ceaselessly about nature, learn that all your ills come to you from yourselves" (326). Rousseau's vast ambition can be seen as part of what he characterizes as the desire for self-expansion (for more on this, and, in particular, on how such a desire can be understood as compatible with Rousseau's equanimity and rejection of *amour-propre*, see Cooper 2004, "Between Eros and Will to Power: Rousseau and 'The Desire to Extend our Being'").

that the passage is a polemic targeting Hobbes, and the parallelism between the account of pity and the account of nascent freedom and perfectibility, it seems reasonable to consider Rousseau's teaching on pity to be an artifice by which he hopes to alleviate some of modernity's ills. To Rousseau, then, pity may have a natural origin within us but it nonetheless needs to be given new (profoundly artificial) foundations in the context of modern enlightened society. From this perspective, Rousseau seems to be engaged in a Prometheus-like project of foundation-laying for a new era of pity in the midst of what he understands to be a harsh post-Enlightenment existence (cf. *First Discourse*, Frontispiece and note, pp. 47-48). Using a careful combination of sentiment and argument aimed at persuading men that pity is natural to them, Rousseau arguably is able to *make* it more natural to them.

It is not clear, however, that the sole reason for Rousseau's presentation of this teaching on pity is its broad potential humanizing effect on society, or the species, as a whole. To understand the other ways in which the teaching on pity fits into Rousseau's 'system,' it is helpful to turn away from the *Second Discourse* and to look more closely at the book in which he openly educates one *individual* in pity. It is there that we find a more compelling account of the intended effects of the Rousseauian pity-teaching on the carefully-raised individual, and, perhaps more importantly, on the thoughtful reader, within civilized society.[23] In the *Emile* the implications of the rational component of pity – and especially the part of the psychological motion that moves *away* from the other after an initial identification – is articulated quite elaborately. Consider the following description of the experience of pity taken from the *Emile*:

[23] Rousseau is explicit about the fact that Emile is merely average – he is chosen from among the vulgar (*Emile*, 245) – which presumably means that the influence the book is meant to have on the careful reader is different from the impact the tutor's education is meant to have on Emile.

> If the first sight that strikes him is an object of sadness, the first return to himself is a sentiment of pleasure. In seeing how many ills he is exempt from, he feels himself to be happier than he had thought he was. He shares the sufferings of his fellows; but this sharing is voluntary and sweet. At the same time he enjoys both the pity he has for their ills and the happiness that exempts him from those ills. He feels himself to be in that condition of strength which extends us beyond ourselves and leads us to take elsewhere activity superfluous to our well-being. (229)

Here we get a glimpse of how the mechanism of pity begins with commiseration but then, once thought follows upon sentiment, the commiseration in fact contributes to our happiness in a complicated way. The outcome of this complete psychological movement is nearly the opposite of our ordinary understanding of pity, insofar as the emphasis is on a sense of separation and independence from the suffering other, and renewed recognition of our own happy circumstances (see Boyd 2004, 524). Even when compassion leads us to "take elsewhere activity superfluous to our well-being," Rousseau's emphasis is on the self rather than the other. Pity is useful because it contributes to Emile's amour de soi, and, in return, Emile's compassion for others is limited by his self-knowledge. It is not a self-sacrificing and extravagant virtue but one that is rooted in strength and knowledge of his own "superfluous" capacities. Emile will feel his difference from others, but he will also feel his capacity to assist them as one of his greatest powers. And, of course, Emile does compassionately help his fellow citizens.

While Emile's pity does have a counter-intuitive, self-regarding character, this need not prevent it from being socially beneficial, since it contributes to Emile's modest kind of citizenship. Soon we learn, for example, how it thwarts and pre-empts the development of Emile's harmful passions:

> [The cultivation of pity serves] To excite in him goodness, humanity, commiseration, beneficence, and all the attractive and sweet passions naturally pleasing to men, and to prevent the birth of envy, covetousness, hate, and all the other repulsive and cruel passions which make sensibility, so to speak, not only nothing, but negative and torment the man who experiences them. (223)

While natural man in the state of nature feels his first sentiments of pity as something inchoate and fleeting – quickly superseded, it would seem, by the other intervening passions – Emile's tutor is to prolong the part of Emile's education where he identifies with others, in preparation for the arrival of the other, more dangerous, passions, as well as other, more socially useful ones. The education in pity makes Emile amenable to social life by making him feel his own similarity to them. As other scholars have persuasively shown, this basic habit of identification will serve Emile well when it comes to more complicated social phenomena, like benevolence (which relies on recognition of mutual good will among citizens), gratitude, and justice.

While Emile's education in pity supports the development of positive social passions, it also has to be acknowledged that at some point there is a shift in the education. It becomes less about Emile's positive, other-directed social engagements, and more about preserving the unity of Emile's soul, by fostering a negative relationship to most of the world. The emphasis shifts to the aspect of pity that recognizes the separateness of the self – especially when it comes to the rich and famous. Emile will learn to have sympathy with the weak in their suffering, based on recognition of similarity (and attended by the recognition of separateness); his pity and disdain for the vain, wealthy, and powerful, highlights the element of "disengagement" and difference in the Rousseauian conception of pity.

The suffering of mankind needs only to be seen to be understood, but the weaknesses of these others need to be seen 'from the inside' in order to be seen for what they are (236). Over the later part of the pity discussion, the tutor is supposed to move Emile's sight from the general suffering of mankind to the particular experiences of individuals (or, alternatively, to show Emile men by way of their differences, "having

already shown him men by means of the accidents common to the species," 235). The purposes of this part of education are made remarkably explicit by Rousseau:

> Since the mask is not the man and his varnish must not seduce them, portray men for them such as they are – not in order that young people hate them but that they pity them *and not want to resemble them*. This is, to my taste, the best-conceived sentiment that man can have about his species. […] I would want him to be taught to know the world so well that *he thinks ill of all that takes place in it*. (emphasis added, 236-7)

Pity is inculcated, at least in part, in order that Emile learn to feel his wholeness and superiority to all that he encounters in the world, thus inoculating him against the envy and resentment that would otherwise develop unchecked. It is a mechanism by which his self-love is prevented from taking on the competitive aspect of *amour-propre*.[24] Whereas *amour-propre* involves imagining oneself through the eyes of others, and therefore can lead to alienation from the self, the habit of pitying teaches us to put ourselves in another's situation while ultimately preserving, and even enhancing, our own sense of well-being.

This next stage of education, which shows men 'from the inside,' requires a different method – namely, it requires that Emile read books other than *Robinson Crusoe*. Now comes the time "to instruct the young man by others' experience rather than by his own" (236). Reading is brought in as a means by which the tutor can manage what Emile sees, preventing him from seeing so much of the world that he becomes "a scandalmonger and a satirist, peremptory and quick to judge" (237). It is desirable instead to "show him the stage from afar, to show him them [men] in other times or other places and in such a way that he can see the stage without ever being able to act on it" (ibid.).

[24] For other treatments of *amour- propre*¸ see Barber (1978, 88-89), Marshall (1986, 94-96), Melzer (1990, 70-72), Orwin (1997, 305-306), and Dent and O'Hagan (2003).

This would involve the study of history, and in particular the genre of Lives.[25] Emile is exposed to others' suffering to the end of seeing that they are not as happy as he is:

> Nurtured in the most absolute liberty, he conceives of no ill greater than servitude. He pities these miserable kings, slaves of all that obey them. He pities these false wise men, chained to their vain reputations. He pities these rich fools, martyrs to their display. He pities these conspicuous voluptuaries, who devote their entire lives to boredom in order to appear to have pleasure. He would even the pity the enemy who would do him harm, for he would see his misery in his wickedness. (244)

Whereas the first part of Emile's education as an adolescent was clearly aimed at cultivating Emile's sensitivity to all he shares with the human race, here it is clear that Emile's pity is fostered also so as to separate him from the whole. He is encouraged to learn about many kinds of life (and even, it would seem, to ferret out their underlying unhappiness), in order that he better appreciate his own. Here again, the rational aspect of pity that, after the initial identification, subsequently makes individuation possible, takes precedence in the education of the "natural" individual. Emile is arguably being made more just in the process, but everything is done so as to cultivate his disdain for the broader community, and thus to preserve Emile's psychological wholeness.[26]

As we soon learn, the major danger that Rousseau foresees in this stage of education is not that Emile might think himself superior to those about whom he reads and who he sees around him, but rather that Emile will think himself deservedly better than them; the greatest threat is not that he will recognize his superiority – this seems rather to be the goal – but that he will proudly consider himself to be responsible for his

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[25] Even the best history presents problems to Rousseau, because, like the theatre, it thwarts the reality of history for the sake of entertainment, but he finally settles on Plutarch (or with those works "drawn by my hand") for this stage in Emile's education, because in Plutarch, "however much the man may conceal himself, the historian pursues him everywhere" (240). For an in-depth discussion of Rousseau's autobiographical works as representations of this genre, see Kelly, *Rousseau's Exemplary Life: The "Confessions" as Political Philosophy*.

[26] For the best accounts of Rousseau's emphasis on psychological wholeness over bourgeois corruption, see Melzer 1980 and 1990.

own superiority (see Nichols 1985, 543 and 549). With this the deeper goal of Emile's education in pity is revealed more plainly: it is to cultivate a recognition of his individual superiority without any sense either of individual entitlement, or of cruelty or indignation towards those who are not similarly fortunate. Carefully considered, Rousseau's teaching on pity in the Emile can be seen as part of an elaborate lesson in amour-propre and self-love. In its strange combination of general fellow-feeling and targeted misanthropy, is a far cry from how we typically conceptualize compassion's role in society.

V. Rousseau's Twofold Compassion Teaching

Rousseau's teaching on compassion seems to do two things: it supports and promotes the idea that compassion can serve a unifying role in society at large, but it can also be employed as part of an education project to promote an individual's sense of personal strength and self-worth. There is a tension, it would seem, between these two, since merely acknowledging the latter undermines the former. It is not surprising, therefore, that there is confusion among scholars about what precisely Rousseau is endorsing with this teaching on compassion. It is tempting to see in the *Emile* further justification for Boyd's view that reason and the sense of difference overwhelm natural sentiment in *Emile*, and delegitimizes compassion as a political force in Rousseau. Such a reading suggests that ultimately the teaching on compassion is simply untrue. At the same time, however, others have done an admirable job proving that, for Emile, compassion does serve as a sub-rational foundation for the conscience, and for social virtues like gratitude and justice (see Marks 2006, 576-579). Indeed, for Marks, the endorsement of compassion is an important part of Rousseau's wider teaching on nature. For him, a lot rests on the fact that in the *Second Discourse* Rousseau praises a certain era of the savage

state of nature as the "happiest and longest-lasting epoch … the least subject to revolutions, the best for man" (*Second Discourse*, 151; see Marks 2005, especially 61-65). Marks argues that this egalitarian "savage state" forms the basis of the "savage pattern" that Rousseau advocates as a natural standard by which to judge and overcome the inherent disharmonies of political life (see 2005, 12).[27] It is also true, we should note, that this stage would be the most conducive to widespread compassion within the citizenry. But if Marks is correct about the natural standard provided by the savage state, why would Rousseau make the picture so much more complicated? My suggestion is that, while Boyd's reading overstates the power of the apolitical dimension of Rousseau's teaching, Marks' reading overstates the natural sociability of man in Rousseau. By attending to Rousseau's rhetoric, it is possible to resolve some of these tensions.

Marks is right, it seems to me, to emphasize that there is something special about the savage state to Rousseau, for it represents what is best for man generally. But he does not sufficiently acknowledge that the savage state, whatever its historical status, is now merely an abstraction that describes a period of mankind's development in which the real problems of justice and inequality have not even arisen. The savage state may be a model for mankind, since it is good for the average man, but it is not a fair model for men, because inequality brings a genuine tension between the good of the community and the good of some individuals. I agree with Marks that Rousseau does advocate a number of "middling" states that represent the overcoming of the inherent disharmonies of modern political life, but would argue that the savage state is appropriate as a model only because the inequalities of civil life have become so corrupt and unjust that an extreme rhetorical

[27] While I hesitate to go as far as Marks about the extent of the guidance provided by nature, I do agree with his suggestion that Strauss and Melzer go too far in the opposite direction, attributing to Rousseau a radical stance that is belied by the standard of nature in *Emile,* and that of Rousseau's own supremely "natural" life.

corrective is in order. Thus, when Marks tentatively suggests that Rousseau's savage state involves his "abandonment of individualism, which leaves us subhuman, in favor of community, which makes us human" (2005, 62), I can agree only to a point. The embrace of the savage state is Rousseau's acknowledgement of the natural sociability of man (and an indication that original man is in fact meant as a caricature to show us the deficiencies of Hobbes), but Rousseau never abandons a certain kind of individualism as a goal suitable at least for a few. My suggestion is that, much as Boyd suggests, understanding the rationale behind Rousseau's treatment of compassion does threaten to undermine its power. But Boyd neglects the force of Rousseau's rhetoric, which is still staunchly on compassion's sentimental, unifying side, even in the *Emile*. But this should be seen as part of Rousseau's pedagogical intention, not a flaw in the account. Just as that which the careful reader sees in the tutor's treatment of Emile differs from Emile's actual experience, the full analysis performed by a Boyd or a Marks is not the same as what the average reader takes away from the various discussions of compassion in Rousseau. Emile's education in compassion is subtly directed towards the cultivation of independence, and some of Rousseau's readers are meant to take this to heart.

The preceding analysis has been concerned with untangling Rousseau's often perplexing account of human pity, as it is variously outlined in several of his works; it has also considered how he understands pity to be relevant in the education of young Emile. Over the course of that examination, a correspondence has emerged between Rousseau's understanding of the psychological structure of pity and the respective layers of his own teaching. Upon comparing the various accounts of how pity operates in the *Second Discourse*, *The Essay on the Origin of Languages*, and *Emile*, it becomes clear that pity takes place in formally separable stages, and that the various stages receive different degrees of emphasis in the different books. In the *Second Discourse* Rousseau

emphasizes the role of sentiment, and our pain at the sight of suffering; in the *Essay on Languages* – a less overtly political work – reason and the faculty of imagination are shown to be integral to the experience; and if we carefully consider the discussion of pity in *Emile* it becomes clear that the capacity to identify with another corresponds psychologically to the capacity to feel one's own separateness from them. We come to understand that pity involves, more or less consciously, the coming back to oneself, and that this results in a certain pleasure in one's own relative well-being.

Though Rousseau's rhetoric (most clearly at play in the *Second Discourse*) surely means to employ the notion of pity in order to foster mutual identification and fellow feeling, and to temper modern peoples' cruel treatment of one another, in *Emile* he is occasionally surprisingly upfront with his reader about how an education in pity can be used not only to set the foundations for social justice alongside a healthy *amour de soi,* but also to inure a person against the alienating dangers of the world. The education in pity, then, can lead to rather counter-intuitive ends, and while Emile himself is subject to all of his tutor's machinations without having access to Rousseau's underlying rationale, the careful reader will recognize the gulf between some of the goals of Emile's education in compassion and our ordinary understanding of it. The reader starts to appreciate exactly how reason threatens to undermine the positive social passions when Rousseau lets us glimpse its twofold role.

The faculty of pity, which involves both initial identification with another and subsequent individuation or separation, corresponds, then, to two purposes of Rousseau's pity doctrine: Rousseau's teaching on compassion is aimed not only at promoting a more egalitarian, sentimental, and merciful society, but also, quite paradoxically, at cultivating readers who are more robust, independent, and free individuals within that society. Though these two movements are certainly in tension with one another, Rousseau's

method of writing allows him to cultivate both tendencies in his reading audience, depending on their individual character. The surface presentation of the *Second Discourse* uses appeals to the passions, and encourages a simple acceptance of the naturalness and goodness of compassion for human flourishing, as a powerful antidote to Hobbes' picture of human nature and the harshness of the society that results from a reductionist understanding of human morality. This presentation, however, is attended by confounding examples that invite one to consider the other possibilities buried within his complex treatment, and especially to question Rousseau's claims in the *Second Discourse* about the independent primacy of sentiment in human psychology. As we have seen in the *Emile*, such an examination might lead to quite a radical understanding of Rousseau's pity doctrine – that it is intended to lead some to dismiss as inferior all that exists around them in modern, corrupt society. The reasoning reader, in effect, could start to feel a lot less sentimental, and to think a lot more like a misanthropic, isolated philosopher. Rousseau's muted treatment of the twofold role of reason in pity underscores this danger, even while it invites the reader to contemplate the potential benefits of a rationalistic retreat from corrupt public life.

Such a reading is doubtless controversial, since it highlights a major tension between the public-spirited dimension of pity and its personally gratifying side. Perhaps no one would be so adverse to this reading of Rousseauian doctrine as his very own Savoyard Vicar, who steps into the *Emile* as a radical defender of morality against the kind of rationalistic retreat my reading proposes. At this point it is therefore important briefly to consider the outlook of the Vicar.

VI. The Objection of the Savoyard Vicar

The "Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar" is one of Rousseau's most powerful and influential writings. Carefully embedded in the pages of *Emile*, the "Profession" serves to deliver a radical new theology to Rousseau's 18th Century audience. Its placement in the course of *Emile* is the subject of much debate, since it differs in many respects from the general course of the work. With respect to our current subject, for example, we might note that, whereas the education of Emile to this point is focused consciously and exclusively on earthly experiences and motives, the Savoyard Vicar's message involves a good deal of metaphysical abstraction and overtly defends a system of divine causes and rewards for human morality beyond what *Emile* ever embraces explicitly.[28] The general message of *Emile* is that, through careful psychological manipulation – involving an education in pity, *amour de soi,* and, eventually love, over alienating *amour propre* – man might become naturally whole and attain a degree of morality appropriate to corrupt modern life. The speech of the Savoyard Vicar abruptly interrupts this narrative, and, though it is radical and unorthodox in its own way – the Vicar's creed involves a good deal of autonomous pseudo-Cartesian reasoning, and overtly questions the legitimacy of revelation – it also ultimately provides a rich defense of conventional morality.[29] The status of this defense is a subject of controversy, partly because the speech of the Vicar is such an anomaly in the course of the work, and involves a complex narrative framing that calls attention to its exceptional character.[30] Does Rousseau use the Vicar as a mouthpiece for his most radical beliefs about morality and religion, or is the Vicar at

[28] Emile does come to believe in the divine, but not necessarily through the speech of the Vicar, which seems to target corrupt modern readers. On this point see Marks (2006, 582) and Melzer (1996).

[29] This is, I admit, the whole question of the "Profession": does it succeed in upholding a universal, transcendent form of morality? As will become evident, I do not think that it does, since the grounds of the Vicar's conscience are located squarely in his own idiosyncratic self.

[30] For a good discussion of this narrative frame and the debates surrounding it, see Emberley (1986, 305-309), Macy (1992, 629), Bloom's Introduction to *Emile* (1979, 20); and Nichols (1985, 547-551).

once a mouthpiece for some views and a mask for others?[31] I do not intend to go into all of the subtleties of this complicated question, but will briefly address how the Vicar's speech can be understood in relation to my rhetorical reading of Rousseau's account of compassion.

The Savoyard Vicar is portrayed as a compassionate and generous guide to the youthful Jean-Jacques, who is struck by the profound consistency of the Vicar's private life: it contained "virtue without hypocrisy, humanity without weakness, speech that was always straight and simple, and conduct always in conformity with this speech" (264); Rousseau will refer to him as the "man of peace" (266). Early on we learn that the Vicar seems to be in agreement with some of Rousseau's educational principles, including the surprising notion that pity is a healthy psychological experience for a young person, and appropriate in that it fosters independence from the miseries of the social world. He is "moved with compassion for human weaknesses by the profound sentiment of his own," and teaches that "peace of soul consists in contempt for everything which can trouble it" (265). Perhaps most importantly, the Vicar also claims to be happy (266), and promises to tell the young Rousseau about the sources of his well-being, an offer which inspires the "Profession of Faith" proper. The speech begins with a brief account of the Vicar's troubled youth, and his arriving at a state of deep perplexity. Like Rousseau, the Vicar

[31] Emberley (1986, 299-301) and Macy (1992, 618 n8 and 619n9) each helpfully outline the several interpretive approaches to the Vicar's speech. Some commentators neglect the possibility that the Vicar's speech involves strategic prudence in the face of the still-powerful religious authorities of his day. These commentators include Grimsley, Masson, Roche, Cassirer, Levine, Dickstein, Levine, Hampson, Blum, Starobinski, Ellenburg, and Ravier. They tend to identify the Vicar's views on metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics with Rousseau's own. Others, including Emberley and Macy, question this reading, and call our attention to important points of difference between Rousseau's philosophy and the Vicar's speech. Others of this camp include Strauss, Masters, Bloom, Marshall, Butterworth, Melzer, Marks, and Nichols. The best overall treatment of the speech of the Vicar that I have found is in Melzer's 1996 article, "The Origin of the Counter- Enlightenment: Rousseau and the New Religion of Sincerity" (see especially 345-351). Melzer's article is perhaps most useful in its clear articulation of the relationship between Rousseau's critique of Christianity and his critique of modern intellectualism.

repeatedly speaks polemically against philosophy, but he does so without mentioning the kinds of exceptions that Rousseau does in the *First Discourse*. And despite his skepticism about philosophy, the Vicar offers the young man a sophisticated teaching on a wide range of human questions. The speech is comprised of a developed epistemology, metaphysics, morality, and theology. For our purposes, the most important part of the speech is the Vicar's defense of the inner voice of the soul, or the conscience, as the touchstone of genuine human knowing and a true guide for moral action. It, along with the belief in divine order, provides the Vicar with the confidence to live an upright, virtuous life. As Macy notes, "the emphasis on man's conscience coupled with the belief in Divine justice are the hallmarks of the Vicar's anthropocentric theology" (1992, 629).

In what follows I want only to make a limited argument about the character of the Vicar's conscience, in order to show why it raises more questions as it solves, and thus why it does not disprove my argument about the two-fold character of Rousseau's teaching on pity. The character of the conscience articulated in the "Profession of Faith" is the subject of some controversy, and my suggestion is that this is not surprising given the confused and contradictory character of the Vicar's account. While he seeks for a way to ground his moral sense beyond himself, he ends up waffling between the worlds of sense-perception and passive sentiment, on the one hand, and the worlds of active human reason and divine judgment and will on the other. Whereas, as we have seen, Rousseau's understanding of the relationship between the passions and reason is one of complex symbiotic development rooted in the needs of nature, the Vicar is a somewhat unreliable proponent of an ethic grounded on an untenable and confusing dualism. My basic point is that the epistemology outlined by the Vicar early on in his speech contradicts his

subsequent claims about the conscience.[32] As such, it should not be seen as representative of Rousseau's own considered view.

The epistemology described by the Vicar is consistent with Rousseau's general willingness to speak of sentiment as primary to reason, seen most vividly in the *Second Discourse*, but it takes that tendency much further, by grounding all truth on the sincerity of the heart. This involves, initially, an interesting but problematic conflation of sense perception and sentimentality, of sensory feelings and "feelings." Early into his speech, after offering the youth to whom he speaks a brief personal history that includes an account of a frustrating life in the Church and disappointing encounters with philosophy, he turns to elucidate his own humble epistemology:

> I am resolved to accept as evident all knowledge to which in the sincerity of my heart I cannot refuse my consent; to accept as true all that which appears to me to have a necessary connection with this first knowledge; and to leave all the rest in uncertainty without rejecting it or accepting it and without tormenting myself to clarify it if it leads to nothing useful for practice. (269-270)

For all the important questions, then, the Vicar will take his bearings in the sincerity of his heart. His next step is to consider the question of the self, and he discovers that he has a dualistic nature, the description of which helps us to understand what he means by the sentiment of the heart:

> I am not simply a sensitive and passive being but an active and intelligent being; and whatever philosophy may say about it, I shall dare to pretend to the honor of thinking. I know only that truth is in things and not in the mind which judges them, and that the less

[32] Even those who take the Vicar's view to be Rousseau's own rarely argue that it is perfectly consistent. Masson calls the "Profession" "a sentimental manifesto where we must not look for too much intellectual cohesion" (quoted in Dickstein, 1961); Dickstein, who disagrees with Masson's judgment nonetheless admits that "[Rousseau] sometimes chooses and employs key terms more for the power and immediacy of their appeal than for theoretical clarity. This is especially true of his religious views as placed in the mouth of the Savoyard Vicar in *Emile*" (1961). Dickstein goes on to argue for the rationality and integrity of the Savoyard's doctrine of the conscience, and though this is helpful because it helps to show the rationalist dimension of Rousseau's thought against his much-celebrated sentimentalism, Dickstein never deals with the tension between the Vicar's ethics and his epistemology. He concludes that Rousseau's strength is "not as a theoretician or an abstract thinker, but as we have implied, as a moralist" (53).

> of myself I put in the judgments I make, the more sure I am of approaching the truth. Thus my rule of yielding to sentiment more than to reason is confirmed by reason itself. (272)

The Vicar is adamant here that the active faculty of the human mind is to be trusted as little as possible, since it is not as closely related to truth, which is external and "in things and not in the mind that judges them." Though he acknowledges that the mind ("let it be called attention, meditation, reflection, or whatever one wishes," 271) plays a role in communicating between passive perceptions, and in gathering and selecting sensory data, he insists that intelligence should yield to sentiment. Against all the precautions of the moderns, who counsel that to trust the senses is to invite delusion, the Vicar, at least here at the beginning, puts his faith in sensation. It is hard to see, however, how the sentiment of the heart, which the Vicar here associates clearly with "sensitive and passive" sensory perception, is not also somehow an active rational faculty – especially insofar as it is capable of giving consent, and hence of making judgments. This problem does not go away over the course of the "Profession."[33]

As the Vicar proceeds to outline his theology, we get a glimpse of the active role played by his consenting heart. The Vicar's several "dogmas" are deduced using the method outlined above. He knows that there are spontaneous motions because he "senses it" (272); there is an external cause to the motions of the universe that the Vicar knows

[33] The Vicar acknowledges that it is difficult to know how sensations interact with thought, but nonetheless insists on a strict duality that is appealed to in support of the immortality of the soul (see, for example, 274, 283, 285). As Emberley notes (1986, 312), Emile is never allowed recourse to anything like the "sentiment of the heart" or an "inner light" in his deliberations, let alone such immediate trust in sensory experience. Compare, in this regard, Emile's examination of the stick in water (201-206, "Emile has little knowledge, but what he has is truly his own") to the Vicar's (271). Or consider the following brief statement of Rousseau's: "At first our pupil had only sensations. Now he has ideas. He only felt; now he judges; for from the comparison of several successive or simultaneous sensations and the judgment made of them is born a sort of mixed or complex sensation which I call an idea" (203, for more on the respective role of judgment and sensation in *Emile*, see 203-208). Although, as Jonathan Marks points out, eventually Emile's moral development will require more than sound reasoning (Marks shows persuasively that Emile's conscience requires religion and rhetoric in addition to the benevolence that the tutor cultivates experientially, 2006, 578-582), the contrast between the tutor's basic method with Emile and the Vicar's basic methods with himself is striking.

because “Inner persuasion makes this cause so evident to my senses that I cannot see the sun rotate without imagining a force that pushes it; or if the earth turns, I believe I sense a hand that makes it turn” (273); he sees a will behind the motion, and an intelligence behind the will (273-275). He speaks of his confusion in the face of grand metaphysical questions, and then suggests that we “listen to our inner sentiment” (275) which will not deny the supreme being: “I believe therefore that the world is governed by a powerful and wise will. I see it or, rather, I sense it; and that is something important for me to know” (276). God is only something he can sense, not something he can conceptualize: “suffused with the sense of my inadequacy, I shall never reason about the nature of God without being forced to by the sentiment of His relations with me” (277). Throughout this whole opening section, the Vicar depends on his senses (interpreted, it would seem, by his heart), and consistently distrusts reason and intelligence – or the active principle.

As soon as the Vicar turns to consider moral man, however, this hierarchy between the sentiments and judgment changes dramatically, and the Vicar’s language shifts into a different kind of dualism:

> In meditating on the nature of man, I believed I discovered in it two distinct principles: one of which raised him to the study of eternal truths, to the love of justice and moral beauty, and to the regions of the intellectual world whose contemplation is the wise man’s delight; while the other took him basely into himself, subjected him to the empire of the senses and to the passions which are their ministers, and by means of these hindered all that the sentiment of the former inspired in him. In sensing myself carried away and caught up in the combat of these two contrary motions, I said to myself, “No man is not one. I want and I do not want; I sense myself enslaved and free at the same time. I see the good, I love it, and I do the bad. I am active when I listen to reason, passive when my passions carry me away; and my worst torment, when I succumb, is to sense that I could have resisted.” (278-279)

This is a stark reversal from the Vicar’s earlier distrust of the active intelligence and trust of the senses and sentiment. The Vicar glosses over this transformation by noting that the intellectual world, which should inspire sentiment, is now thwarted by passion, but the

confusion is clear. Whereas previously he trusted the passive sentiments against the active judgment, now he trusts active reason (which he will soon identify with the will) at the expense of the senses and their "ministering" passions. Where previously he placed trust in the things of the world, he will now repeatedly express distrust of the temptations of the external world and its objects, identifying these with the passive, sensory, bodily aspect of his reversed duality; morality involves overcoming these temptations (see 281).

And yet the Vicar also continues throughout to appeal to his previous epistemology, and to distrust thinking: he senses his free will, and "this is stronger than the reason combating it" (280); he "senses" that his "will is independent of his senses" (281). He even returns to the subject of his method in a way that calls attention to the problematic confusion that has arisen:

> After having thus deduced the principal truths that it mattered for me to know from the impression of sensible objects and from the inner sentiment that leads me to judge of causes according to my natural lights, I still must investigate what manner of conduct I ought to draw from these truths. […] In continuing to follow my method, I do not draw these rules from the principles of a high philosophy, but find them written by nature with ineffaceable characters in the depth of my heart. (286)

And then again, having just insisted upon the continuity of his method, in the very same paragraph the Vicar reverts to a morality that identifies with active judgment against the senses:

> I have only to consult myself about what I want to do. Everything I sense to be good is good: everything I sense to be bad is bad. […] How many times does the inner voice tell us that, in doing our good at another's expense, we do wrong! We believe we are following the impulse of nature, but we are resisting it. In listening to what it says to our senses, we despise what it says to our hearts; the active being obeys, the passive being commands. Conscience is the voice of the soul; the passions are the voice of the body. (286)

The Vicar's epistemology is in near-perfect contradiction with his moral psychology, since on the whole he sides with the senses and "sentiment" when it comes to epistemology, and with the active mind against the senses when it comes to morality.

The big problem here is that epistemology and morality are not neatly separable, since moral decisions are grounded on moral "knowing." In keeping with this relationship, the Vicar's epistemological reliance on the inner sentiment of the heart translates into the moral reliance on the conscience. In other words, the Vicar's discussion of conscience trades on the confusion surrounding the actual status – is it passive sentiment, or an active faculty? – of the inner voice.[34] As we see above, the conscience is first identified with the soul against the passions of the body, and next we learn that, like the "inner voice," it never deceives, but is man's true guide and akin to the voice of nature (286-287). But soon the Vicar dodges the question of how the conscience is related to reason (perhaps one of the questions the young Rousseau has in mind at 287, top): "There is in the depths of souls, then, an innate principle of justice and virtue according to which, in spite of our own maxims, we judge our actions and those of others as good or bad. It is to this principle that I give the name *conscience*" (289). The "innate principle" in the depths of souls, we learn, is also a kind of judgment, but the Vicar no longer speaks of judgment as an active force against the senses. As his speech progresses,

[34] For a list of the various interpretations of the conscience that have emerged from this confusion, see Marks 2006, 565-566. Marks provides an account of the development of Emile's own conscience with which we might compare the Vicar's outlook. He persuasively shows some of the important differences between Rousseau's probable understanding of conscience, as it is cultivated in *Emile*, and the Vicar's outlook. Marks' account shows the essentially passionate character of Emile's conscience, and its rational limits, without being overly reductive of Rousseau's own views and motives (on this see especially his concluding remarks, 584-585). I agree with Marks' characterization of the conscience as essentially passionate, since it is grounded in the passion of self-love (579), but would add that reason and ideas are nonetheless part of the psychic mix (see *Emile* 203). Melzer persuasively argues that the Rousseauian conscience can be closely identified with what he calls the "New Religion of Sincerity," since our connection to the "inner sentiment" is based on nothing if not sincerity; in this sense, Melzer argues, "inner revelation replaces the biblical" (1996, 352-354). Like Melzer, I worry that the inner sentiment or conscience ultimately involves a conflation of sentiment and judgment that is reducible to mere wishful thinking (see Melzer 1996, 354-358). Orwin bitingly articulates some of the political dangers deriving from this move as it relates to the contemporary embrace of compassion: "[compassion] does not correct for the partiality of our perspective on justice. It merely extends to a few other people the good offices of our egocentrism" (1980, 325).

he actively denies that conscience works actively, returning to the language of his sentimental epistemology:

> Were all the philosophers to prove that I am wrong, if you sense that I am right, I do not wish for more. For that purpose I need only to make you distinguish our acquired ideas from our natural sentiments; for we sense before knowing, and since we do not learn to want what is good for us and to flee what is bad for us but rather get this will from nature, by that very fact love of the good and hatred of the bad are as natural as the love of ourselves. *The acts of the conscience are not judgments but sentiments. Although all our ideas come to us from outside, the sentiments evaluating them are within us and it is by them alone that we know the compatibility or incompatibility between us and the things we ought to seek or flee.* (emphasis added, 289-290)

Though the Vicar employs the same language, note that here his original epistemological outlook is altered in one critical respect: whereas earlier his faith lay in the things outside, now he trusts the internal sentiments over and above external things.

Tellingly, Rousseau concludes the first part of the "Profession of Faith" (the second part deals with revelation and I will not discuss it further here) with an acknowledgement that when he had originally heard the speech he had was full of objections, but that he did not raise them with the Vicar because "persuasiveness was on his side" (294). My suggestion is that, far from posing a real obstacle to my unorthodox rhetorical reading of Rousseau's teaching on compassion, the Vicar's speech provides us with another illustration of Rousseau's mastery of persuasive rhetoric, now operating from a different direction. We might characterize the difference as follows: generally when Rousseau speaks in his own voice, he uses appeals to the passions to make his (oftentimes weak) arguments more persuasive; in the "Profession of Faith," where he speaks as someone else, Rousseau shows a willingness and capacity to use incoherent arguments as part of his broad defense of salutary sentimentality. Ironically, just as his manipulative but persuasive appeals to the passions, say, in the *Second Discourse*, ultimately do demonstrate that even benevolent passions like compassion play a large

role in human psychology (even if not exactly "by nature" in the typical sense of the word), similarly the persuasiveness of the bad arguments of the Vicar (evident in so much of the secondary literature on Rousseau) demonstrates the legitimacy of Rousseau and the Vicar's shared skepticism about the public value of theoretical refutations. Just as sophisms in defense of materialism can corrupt the insufficiently thoughtful, sophisms in defense of morality can inspire virtue. This is not, however, to say that the Vicar's skepticism about the ultimate value of philosophy is justified. As others have argued successfully, and as I have tried to sustain, the Vicar's deep distrust of reason is not something Rousseau shares.

There are many points of agreement between Rousseau and his Vicar, but there are also a number of deep disagreements. My purpose here is not to provide a thorough treatment of these contrasts, valuable though it would be, since that would involve us in issues reaching far beyond the scope of my subject. I would like to highlight a few important points by way of conclusion. As mentioned, both the Vicar and Rousseau share a certain skepticism towards religious and philosophic authority, but while the Vicar ultimately upholds a clear belief in the divine, Rousseau's position on the divine is full of ambiguity.[35] Similarly, the Vicar claims to be unable to sustain a position of doubt and settles into a fixed moral outlook based on what he calls the love of truth; Rousseau, as we will see in the next chapter, lives a life that is full of uncertainty, and punctuated by philosophic growth and development. On a more pedestrian note, both the Vicar and Rousseau experience "unconventional" relationships with women throughout their lives,

[35] See Macy (1992) for a solid defense of the notion that Rousseau disagrees in fundamental ways with the Vicar on this essential point (Macy's argument is based on a careful reading of Rousseau's footnotes to the speech of the Vicar); see also Butterworth (1979, 176-179) for a persuasive treatment of the question of Rousseau's religiosity. Emberley also offers a good treatment of some of the most important similarities and differences between Rousseau and the Vicar that has informed my discussion here significantly. Finally, see Bloom's Introduction to *Emile* (1979, 20), and Melzer (1996).

but while the Vicar displays guilt and confusion about his choices (see Emberley 322), Rousseau's capacity for guilt and regret is, again as we will see in the next chapter, seriously limited. This last difference is related to one of the most significant points of comparison between the two: while the Vicar is a dualist who struggles with the mind-body relationship and the related debate about the grounds of the conscience, Rousseau questions modern materialism without committing to a dualistic or otherworldly system of thought.[36] His psychological observations and teachings are always centered in an understanding of man situated squarely in nature (see Emberley 305-308). Finally, it could be argued that the Vicar achieves peace and a degree of happiness that Rousseau never quite manages; this too, I would suggest, is far from being a settled question, and one which I take up at length in the next chapter.

My general suggestion about the Savoyard Vicar is that he is an important piece of Rousseau's rhetorical project, and that, in addition to providing a mouthpiece for some of Rousseau's unorthodox religious thoughts, the Vicar masks some of Rousseau's more corrupting philosophic ones. Rousseau chooses the Vicar on the basis, we might suppose, of the personal experience he relates to us in the course of the telling, but the Vicar also provides a good case study in the role of *ethos,* or character, in persuasion. It is worth considering what it is about the defrocked Vicar that makes him an especially suitable messenger for the "Profession of Faith," and why Rousseau did not put it in his own name. One basic reason why he might have chosen to use the Vicar in the dramatic way that he does is signaled by Rousseau towards the end of Book IV of *Emile,* where he digresses for several pages on the subject of persuasion (see Marks 2006, 578-579). The following passage is especially noteworthy:

[36] On Rousseau's epistemological confidence relative to the Vicar, see Emberley 1986, 312-313; on his non-dualism, see 315.

> One of the errors of our age is to use reason in too unadorned a form, as if men were all mind. In neglecting the language of signs that speak to the imagination, the most energetic of languages has been lost. The impression of the word is always weak, and one speaks to the heart far better through the eyes than through the ears. In wanting to turn everything over to reasoning, we have reduced our precepts to words; we have made no use of actions. Reason alone is not active. It sometimes restrains, it arouses rarely, and it has never done anything great. Always to reason is the mania of small minds. Strong souls have quite another language. It is with this language that one persuades and makes others act. (321)

If we relate this back to the Vicar, it seems clear that Rousseau's complex 'staging' of the "Profession of Faith" contributes significantly to its power, especially insofar as it makes the young Jean-Jacques into the target audience, and hereby intimates a certain intimacy and agreement between them. The set-up also brings the "Profession" to life in the mind's eye, and provides a vivid, if somewhat fictional, moral context in which to imagine the speech. There are surely a good number of reasons for Rousseau's choice of the Vicar beyond these.

One simple temptation we should be wary of as we proceed to consider Rousseau's self-presentation is the idea that Rousseau could dissemble through the mouthpiece of the Vicar, and other fictional characters, in order that he could always remain utterly truthful to and about himself. While I do think Rousseau is profoundly honest, it is by no means in a conventional sense. Nowhere is this truer than in his autobiographical writings. In *Emile* Rousseau praises the ancients, and the Romans in particular, for their talent in rhetorical acts: "Everything with them was display, show, ceremony, and everything made an impression on the hearts of its citizens" (322). This, I argue, is a lesson which Rousseau took very much to heart – and employed to great effect both in his writings and in his life.

Chapter 2: Living Rhetorically, *à la* Jean-Jacques

In the previous chapter I explored how Rousseau's teaching on compassion fits within his "system," or within his broader political and rhetorical project of cultural democratization and individual education. Through an analysis of Rousseau's treatment of compassion in the *Second Discourse* and other works, I argued that Rousseau deliberately exaggerates the sentimental dimension of compassion, while underplaying its essential rational component. This tactic is consistent with his skepticism about the public value of rationalism, and when we begin to understand the twofold role of reason involved in compassion – the identification with the other, and subsequent mental separation – we start to see one way in which understanding can corrupt. As Rousseau discloses the roots of compassion (in self-love), and the self-centered dimension of the education of *Emile* (the education in compassion leads to the growth of Emile's sense of well-being), it is hard not to question the ethical nature of compassion. Is it as closely related to benevolence, gratitude, conscience, and justice as Rousseau indicates? And if it is not, then what exactly forms the natural foundation for these moral and political qualities? Even if Rousseau ultimately thinks that there are grounds for morality and community, natural or otherwise, understanding the rational dimension of compassion is just as likely to foster skepticism about such abstractions as justice and the law as it is to ground one's confidence in them. The Vicar's speech, which provides a sophisticated defense of the moral conscience, raises questions of its own. The elaborateness of Rousseau's technique here is impressive, but at bottom the arguments are not sound: the Vicar's *logos* upholds a sentimental morality, but not an obviously rational one. Again in keeping with the polarized approach of the *First Discourse*, Rousseau employs reason in defense of public morality, while, because he speaks in the voice of another, maintaining clear authorial

distance from that position. In this chapter, I turn to consider the peculiar rhetoric of Rousseau's own self-presentation, as it relates to his teachings on human sentiment and fellow-feeling.

As we have already seen, Rousseau's *oeuvre* contains a splendid array of forms. Between the publication of the *First Discourse* in 1950 and the posthumous *Reveries* (which first appeared in 1782), Rousseau wrote a play, an opera, an epistolary novel, a novel-like educational treatise, several abstract political and philosophic treatises, numerous letters intended for publication, a musical dictionary, a set of constitutional recommendations for Poland, an autobiography, a series of meditative walks, and a set of dialogues. Within these works we encounter a splendid array of characters. We meet a new kind of natural man and a new kind of Citizen; we meet Emile, his tutor, Sophie, and the Savoyard Vicar; we meet Julie, St-Preux, and Wolmar, and then, at long last, in the *Confessions* we are introduced to the cast of characters that makes up Rousseau's own personal history.

If there is one character who comes to dominate Rousseau's *oeuvre* it is Jean-Jacques himself. Of his dozen most significant works, three are autobiographical; Rousseau devoted the final quarter of his tumultuous life to composing *The Confessions, Dialogues,* and *The Reveries of a Solitary Walker*.37 Through them Rousseau explores his life's undertakings, his philosophical development, and his changing social conditions, with such elaborate profundity that the autobiographical writings mark a sea-change in the history of literature and the psychology of the self. They are philosophical works of general import in addition to being personal and particular, and serve at least

[37] Rousseau and his companion Thérèse arrived in Switzerland in 1762, where they lived for three years before taking flight to England in 1766. Within a year they were back in France, residing for spells in Tyre and Bourgoin, before returning to Paris in 1770. Rousseau died in 1778 in Ermenonville, just outside of Paris.

three important functions: they illustrate aspects of Rousseau's thought from the point of view of his own exceptional development; they serve to influence Rousseau's authorial reputation; and they showcase the life devoted to truth, in all its peril.38 A central argument of this chapter is that these works are also disingenuous and ironic. I explore the extent to which Rousseau employed his superb literary talents in his own self-portrait – and especially that of the *Confessions* – for the sake of his own broadest authorial intentions. My suggestion is, more specifically, that an understanding of the twofold rational dimension of Rousseau's teaching on compassion is critical to an adequate understanding of the autobiographical works. Just as compassion involves initial identification and subsequent individuation, the reader is meant initially to feel sympathy for Rousseau, but then is rationally compelled, again and again, to take a step back and question this initial experience. Ultimately we are compelled to look more deeply at what Rousseau actually says about his life.

While Rousseau's rhetorical talents have been widely acknowledged, the overtly rhetorical dimensions of the autobiographical writings have not been sufficiently addressed.[39] This is despite the fact that Rousseau's explicit concern throughout the autobiographical works is to disclose his good character, and the fact that emotional

[38] Authors who discuss the psychological insights of the autobiographical works include Stelzig and Hartle, who show that one of Rousseau's major intentions in the *Confessions* is to explore the natural goodness of man as he discovers it whole in himself (see Stelzig 2000, 19, and Hartle 1983, 3-4, 36-37, 95, and 151-157). For an exploration of the philosophical background to the *Confessions*, see Kelly 1987 and Stelzig 41-112. One of the best discussions of Rousseau's political motives is Kelly's later work, *Rousseau as Author*. For other accounts of the motives behind the autobiographical works, see Cranston (1997, 181-184), Trousson (1988, 425), Damrosch (2005, 437-441), and Darnston (1985, 73). See also Leo Strauss (1947, entire).

[39] The one major exception here is Heinrich Meier's essay on the *Rêveries*, which, going back to the frontispiece of the *First Discourse*, provides a definitive account of Rousseau's rhetoric and its import for understanding Rousseau's works and "system" (see especially 305-311 and 319-321). As mentioned previously, Melzer's discussion of Rousseau's system (1990) is especially helpful as concerns the unity of the theoretical works, but he seems to me to underestimate the ironic quality of the autobiographical ones (see 1, and 253-261). On Rousseau's literary rhetoric, see Cassirer (1954, 35-6) and Kelly's 1999 article, "Taking Readers as They Are: Rousseau's Turn from Discourses to Novels."

affect, or *pathos,* is arguably the overwhelming feature of the works. In each of them, Rousseau makes reference within the first chapter to his long suffering and persecution.. Usually these expressions of misery and ill-humour are taken to be evidence of the unhappiness that permeated the second half of his life (or all but the final few years). The following remark by Maurice Cranston can be taken as representative of the orthodox outlook on Rousseau's later years:

> Condemned to wander the earth in search of asylum, he felt befriended one moment, betrayed the next. Obsessed by feelings of persecution, not all unwarranted, he came to see himself as a social outcast and concentrated on writing autobiographical works aimed at revealing his essential innocence and truthfulness. Through this introspection, he was to transform his misery and solitude into enduring works of literature – the most notable his *Confessions*. (1997, xii)

Such a characterization is compelling insofar as it is in keeping with the tone of Rousseau's autobiographical works, but it is inattentive to the disjunction between the emotional surface of the self-presentation and its underlying narrative rationale.[40] My suggestion is that Rousseau's *pathos*-filled self-presentation intentionally privileges his experiences of pain and suffering, while rhetorically minimizing his pleasures and happiness. Contrary to the traditional reading of the autobiographical works, there is a sense in which Rousseau willingly misrepresents himself, and happily conspires against the majority of his readers. As a result, as readers of Rousseau we have typically misunderstood the place of happiness in Rousseau's life – and have also been insufficiently appreciative of Rousseau's sense of humor. As Anne Chamayou explains,

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[40] The "traditional view" as I see it emerged over the course of twentieth century scholarship. Following the scathing critique of Rousseau delivered by Irving Babbitt in 1917, the philosopher has had a long series of more or less critical defenders. Starobinski is an early critic of Babbitt, but he is still confident that Rousseau was psychologically deranged through the later years (see *Transparency*, 207-212); French historian Raymond Trousson is similarly dismissive of the mature Rousseau (see Trousson 1989, 350, 360, 392, 403, 416, and 425). More sympathetic readers include Cranston, Damrosch, Howarth, Stelzig, and Hartle who do a better job of acknowledging the extent of Rousseau's persecution. See also (in Trousson, 2004) relevant statements by Saint-Germain (173), Mercier (202), Prevost (245), and Corancez (269).

the consensus is that "on ne badine pas avec Rousseau" ("one doesn't banter with Rousseau," 18), as he is too serious, too austere, and his happiness too delicate. To the extent that Rousseau's good-humor and happiness are recognized, they are generally understood to be limited to the epochs that Rousseau describes in Part I of the *Confessions* and to the later period described in the *Reveries*; this traditional breakdown of Rousseau's life should be questioned (Chamayou 2009, 20).

In what follows I endeavor to demonstrate the systematic character of Rousseau's autobiographical dissembling, and to shed light on his reasons for this complex approach, relying mostly on textual evidence from the *Confessions.* The major challenge that my interpretation faces is that it seems to conflict with another core strand of Rousseau's thought, which is his well-documented emphasis on sincerity and full disclosure. I therefore begin my discussion with a restatement of his claims to sincerity, followed by a close analysis of Rousseau's "Fourth Walk." There, in a meditation prompted by doubts about the probity of the *Confessions,* Rousseau unearths his unorthodox understanding of truth-telling. My discussion clears the way for a broader treatment of the *Confessions*. I turn in the second section to describe the (unhappy) rhetorical surface of Rousseau's *Confessions*, and its problematic character. In the third, I turn to discuss the understated counterpoint to Rousseau's loud rhetoric of misery: his quiet but persistent good cheer. Here we have a typical Rousseauian paradox, emerging now around the essential question of human happiness. My suggestion is that Rousseau is in fact more persistently happy than the surface of the autobiographical works imply. I hold, then, that the *logos* of the works contradicts their *pathos*. In the fourth section I discuss Rousseau's idiosyncratic subjectivity – another feature of his complex autobiographical disguise – and how this subjectivity aligns with the historical record. I conclude with a discussion of

the possible reasons behind Rousseau's dissimulations, in light of his ambitious political and cultural goals.

The implications of this new reading of Rousseau's *Confessions* are far-reaching. When we come to understand the extent to which Rousseau writes rhetorically, many of the apparent biographical inconsistencies can be accounted for, and our understanding of Rousseau shifts; the orthodox understanding comes to light as untenable in its neglect of Rousseau's artful authorial maneuvering. While sympathetic biographers such as Cranford and Damrosch typically preserve the apparent inconsistencies of Rousseau's biographical record instead of explaining them, others, like Trousson, even amplify Rousseau's affective tone. When we begin to understand *why* Rousseau portrayed himself as he did, he comes to light as far less vulnerable than he would have us believe, and far more active, gregarious, and cheerful. My reading prepares the way for a new encounter with the historical record, and a new exploration of Rousseauian happiness.[41] It is most consonant with those of Ann Hartle, Christopher Kelly, Eugene Stelzig, Anne Chamayou, and Heinrich Meier, and serves to bridge their different approaches to the autobiographical works. While Hartle, Kelly, and Stelzig emphasize the austere political and philosophical depths of Rousseau's *Confessions*, to the general neglect of his playful qualities and his rhetorical excesses, Chamayou emphasizes the "laughing" side of Rousseau's autobiographical works without accounting for their philosophical depths and *pathos*-filled surfaces. Meier's excellent 2010 essay deals mostly with the *Reveries*, but

[41] I do not mean to suggest that Rousseau did not suffer deeply in his lifetime. From all accounts it is clear that he had a difficult life, that a good part of his suffering was the result of genuine persecution, and that Rousseau in turn could be a tortured and very difficult person. My suggestion is rather that Rousseau's self-presentation is exaggerated, and that he did not suffer as ubiquitously as he implies throughout all three autobiographical works. See Kelly 2003, 1-28 for an elucidation of the conditions underlying Rousseau's persecution, and of his bold response to the particular intellectual conditions of his time. See also Deleyre (in Trousson 2004, 257), Hartle (1983, 122-124), Cranston (1997, 9-13, 71, 134, and 172-176), and Stelzig (2000, 115-125).

he demonstrates with respect to that work what I hope to show here with regards to the *Confessions*: only by attending to Rousseau's rhetoric can we see how these different aspects of Rousseau's character work together to form an intricate, but ultimately coherent and effective, self.

I. A Fortress of Frankness? Justice and Truth-telling in Rousseau

It is important not to underestimate the challenge that Rousseau's stance of complete sincerity poses to my hypothesis concerning his rhetoric. As we saw in the last chapter, Rousseauian rhetoric can be very powerful, but it is far from straight-forward. And my case for Rousseau's autobiographical rhetoric is complicated significantly by the fact that his message of sincerity comes through most vividly in the autobiographical works.[42] Somewhat paradoxically, Rousseau's "braggadocio of sincerity" has even been recognized as part of his rhetorical strategy in the autobiographical works and elsewhere (Stelzig 2000, 5, 36-37). Indeed, the message is so strong that it is tempting to think that Rousseau's rhetoric is limited to the theoretical works, and that he effectively 'turns honest' in the late autobiographical works in order to establish his own credibility *post-hoc*. But when we think through the extent to which Rousseau's supposed earnestness fits, for example, with his consistent glorification of nature and simplicity, this kind of dividing line between periods loses its explanatory force. When, with the help of scholars like Stelzig, Hartle, and Kelly, we see all the deep parallels between Rousseau's theoretical works and his autobiographical ones, the distinction crumbles further. My claim, then, is that Rousseau boasts about his sincerity in part to distract the reader from

[42] For further discussion of Rousseau and the modern virtue of sincerity, see Starobinski (1971, 198-200), Trilling (1971, 58-67), Melzer (1997, entire), Stelzig (2000, 5 and 36-37), Marks (2001, entire), and Kelly (1987, 69-70; 2003, 1-7 and 174). Along with Meier, Szabados and Wright share my skepticism about Rousseauian sincerity (in works dealing primarily with other subjects, see Szabados 4-5 and Wright 85-86).

his habitual dissimulations (a suggestion in agreement with Meier's interpretation of the *Reveries*; he too characterizes Rousseau's rhetoric as "extremely elaborate"; see 2010, 308-311). To prove this, it is necessary to confront the claims to sincerity directly. Such an encounter will also help to sustain my reading of the rhetoric of compassion.

Our first indication of Rousseau's dedication to frankness and complete personal disclosure in the *Confessions* is, of course, the title of the work, which reveals his first choice of autobiographical medium. Confessions entail complete disclosure of a particular kind, however: the self-effacing acknowledgement of one's sinfulness (see Neuchâtel Preface to the *Confessions*, 589, 592). Rousseau departs from the catholic understanding of the confession slightly, however, insofar as he repeatedly insists on disclosing everything – the good as well as the bad (588). He chides Montaigne for pretending to admit his flaws, while only recounting the good. In contrast, Rousseau thinks himself the best of men, but will, more in keeping with St. Augustine, be utterly frank in disclosing his worst vices (433). Unlike St. Augustine, and perhaps more like Montaigne, Rousseau lacks a Christian sense of humility.[43] And yet, we should also note that Rousseau makes a point of distinguishing himself from Socrates, and of distinguishing the confession from the Socratic *apologia*, or defense speech. Contrary to the assumption of many commentators (see, for example, Stelzig 2000, 4), his goal is explicitly *not* self-defense: "I do not fear that the reader will ever forget that I am making my confessions and thereby believe that I am making my apology" (234).[44] Though he is committed to telling the good along with the bad, he also makes it clear that in his case the danger of omission concerns the good and not the bad. In keeping with this

[43] For further discussion of the relationship between Rousseau and St. Augustine, see Hartle (1983, entire, but especially 19-37 and 122-125), H. Williams (1983, 2-3), Kelly (1987, 11-13, 103-107 and 211-212), and Cranston (1997, 180-181).

[44] The same is not true of the *Dialogues* (see Lomax, 2010).

commitment to the confessional over the apology, whenever Rousseau does make apologies in the course of the *Confessions*, it is not in defense of some wrong he has committed, but rather for having said something good about himself, or for having spoken too eagerly about his happiness (see *Confessions,* 50, 120, 197-198, 336, 381, 404, *Dialogue II,* 154-55).

Despite these acknowledged complications, the rhetorical foreground of the *Confessions* conveys total sincerity. Consider the epigraph to both parts of the work, taken from Persius' third Satire: *Intus, et it Cute* (inside and under the skin). Or the third paragraph of the text, which consists of Rousseau's declaration to the Sovereign Judge:

> I have told the good and the evil with the same frankness. I have been silent about nothing bad, added nothing good, and if I have happened to use some inconsequential ornament, this has never happened except to fill up a gap occasioned by my lack of memory; I may have assumed to be true what I knew might have been so, never what I knew to be false. I have shown myself as I was, contemptible and low when I was so, good, generous, sublime when I was so: I have unveiled my interior as Thou has seen it Thyself. (5)

Later on, Rousseau describes his wish to render his soul "transparent to the eyes of the reader in some fashion" (146) and so concludes that he will have to show himself from a variety of perspectives and lights, and, more importantly, that he must relate "in detail and simplicity" everything that has happened to him, and everything he has done, thought, and felt. He wants the reader to be able to judge on their own, and so he must be faithful and exact: "it is not up to me to judge the importance of the facts, I ought to tell them all, and leave to him [the reader] the care of choosing" (146). He concludes the passage, "I have only one thing to fear in this enterprise; that is not to tell too much or to tell lies; no, it is not to tell everything, and to be silent about things that are true" (147). He concludes Part I by stating that his heart is satisfied with the fidelity with which he

has narrated the history of his youth (228). And in Part II, Rousseau continues to make overt claims to frankness. At the end of the whole work, this is what he has to say:

> I have told the truth. If anyone knows some things contrary to what I have just set forth, even if they are proven a thousand times, he knows lies and impostures, and if he refuses to get to the bottom of them and clear them up with me while I am still alive, he does not love either justice or truth. As for me, I declare it loudly and without fear: Anyone who, even without having read my writings, will examine with his own eyes my natural disposition, my character, my morals, my inclinations, my pleasures, my habits, and will be capable of believing that I am a dishonest man, is himself a man fit to be stifled. (550)

To suggest that Rousseau is rhetorically savvy and manipulative, as I am here, is not exactly to call him dishonest, but in light of his strident claims to forthrightness, a defense is in order.

The first thing to note is that Rousseau's avowals of complete disclosure are usually qualified in some significant respect consistent with the specific kind of omission that characterizes the confession but not the defense speech – that of the good. We can see this clearly if we look more closely at the first declaration from the *Confessions*, quoted above. Rousseau declares that he has been equally frank regarding the good and evil that concerns him. But equal frankness does not necessarily imply proportional or even-handed emphasis. Rousseau next suggests that he will omit nothing bad about himself, and will add nothing good, but this leaves wide open the distinct possibility that he is silent about some good things, and inventive when it comes to the bad. It is not difficult to see the irony of Rousseau's promise to acknowledge his "good, generous, and sublime" characteristics in the address to his Sovereign Judge. And in the later statement from Book IV, where Rousseau does emphasize his intention to be even-handed in his disclosures, he cautiously places the ultimate interpretive responsibility on his reader: "It is up to him to assemble these elements and to define the being made up of them; the result ought to be his work, and if he is deceived then, all the error will be of his making,"

(146). It is here at the end of Book IV that Rousseau expresses his one fear – that he might make important omissions, and be "silent about things that are true" (146) – thus again implicitly warning his reader to be on the lookout for signs of such withholdings. The earlier insistence that he will omit nothing bad and add nothing good alerts us to Rousseau's highly unusual propensity: in keeping with the form and spirit of the confessional, he tends to exaggerate the bad and omit the good.

In the *Confessions,* then, Rousseau is committed to a type of frankness that involves disclosure of the good along with the bad, but not necessarily in proportion to their respective prominence in his life. A further complication is that of subjective selectivity: even if one is committed to full disclosure, choices and exclusions are inevitable. Rousseau takes up the problem of subjective selectivity explicitly and at length in the "Fourth Walk" of his *Reveries*, which is a dialectical meditation on the morality of truth-telling prompted by reflection on his life's motto, *vitam impendere vero* ("to consecrate one's life to truth," from Juvenal's fourth Satire, see Kelly 2003, 1-2 and 173-174). This passage of Rousseau's final work has been recognized by scholars as having great import for understanding the autobiographical works. As Ann Hartle (1983, 9-10 and 13-21), Christopher Kelly (2003, 16-18 and 240-242), and Ruth Grant (1997, 111-124) have acknowledged, the "Fourth Walk" excuses a good deal of literary invention on Rousseau's part. They do not, however, recognize the way in which the rigorous logic of the "Fourth Walk" offers a key to understanding the specific dimensions and causes of Rousseau's autobiographical falsifications.

Rousseau begins the "Fourth Walk" by recounting how he had recently been considering his motto in light of the *Confessions,* and had been surprised to realize that the work was in some tension with his commitment to the truth. He asks himself "by what strange inconsistency did I thus lie with gaiety of heart, unnecessarily, without

profit, and by what inconceivable contradiction did I feel not the least regret, I who for fifty years have not ceased to be afflicted by remorse for a lie?" (44). Rousseau's elaborate reply to himself constitutes the rest of the reverie, which is explicitly concerned with the justice of lying. When is the truth owed, Rousseau wonders, and when is something other than the truth (be it concealment or an alternate fabrication) justified? His basic answer involves two important distinctions. The first concerns the difference between general and particular truths, and the second that between just and unjust intentions in speech. Rousseau declares that "general and abstract truth is the most precious of all goods" (44). Using strong rights language, he suggests that general truths belong to all, form the essence of the common good for mankind, and are therefore always owed. This being so, the essence of the *question* of justice concerns particular truths, which, Rousseau claims, are only owed when they are morally useful. When they are not, they might innocently be replaced with useful fictions. "How could we be unjust when we harm no one," Rousseau asks, "since injustice consists only in the wrong done to someone else?" (46).

Injustice, then, involves doing harm to others. More surprising is Rousseau's definition of the lie: "Everything which, contrary to the truth, hurts justice in any way whatsoever is a lie. This is the exact limit" (50). Thus, something has to be both untrue and harmful to justice to constitute a lie. If it is a particular truth that is potentially harmful to justice, there is no positive injunction to share it, and if it is merely untrue, but not harmful to justice, there is no injunction against it. The most obvious difficulty here, apart from differentiating between general and particular truths, is that it is seldom easy to determine when and to whom what one says will be helpful or harmful to justice. Rousseau readily acknowledges this and other difficulties in the course of his meditation:

> Must the truth which profits one person while harming another be kept quiet or uttered? Is the scale of the public good the thing? Rules of Equity? Moreover, in examining what we owe others have I sufficiently examined what we owe ourselves and what we owe truth for its own sake? If I do no harm to another in deceiving him, does it follow that I do none to myself, and is it sufficient to be never unjust in order to be always innocent? (47)

In response to some of these problems, Rousseau suggests that his solution is to trust the dictates of his conscience (48), though he also comes up with several rules by which to judge any speaker or writer. If one is to engage in deception, there must be no intent to do harm, and there must be certainty that the error will do no harm to anyone in any way (48; see Meier 2010, 312-313). All the while, Rousseau admits that this is not an altogether satisfying resolution to the problem of determining harmfulness, especially given the vulnerable public's credulity. What Rousseau never seems to doubt is his own capacity to make such complicated assessments (and, we might note, he does not mention recourse to any fixed "inner sentiment").[45] He is also confident about the legitimacy of his kind of dissembling: "To lie without profit or prejudice to ourselves or another is not to lie: it is not a lie; it is a fiction" (48).

With this we see that Rousseau has slightly altered his definition of justice, for now he refers to the possibility of prejudicing ourselves – which brings us to the heart of the issue in the *Confessions*. As if to alert his reader to this concern, Rousseau finishes the fourth *Reverie* by accusing himself of violating his own rules. Since "to deceive to our detriment is also a real lie," Rousseau confesses that he may be guilty of genuine injustice:

> Far from having kept silent about anything or concealed anything which went against me, by a twist of mind which I have difficulty explaining to myself and which perhaps comes from my estrangement from all imitation, I felt myself more readily inclined to lie in the contrary sense by accusing myself with too much severity than by excusing myself with

[45] For an analysis of how Rousseau's view of truth compares to that of the Savoyard Vicar, see Macy (1992, 624-626).

> too much indulgence; my conscience assures me that one day I will be judged less severely than I have judged myself. (54)

Rousseau goes on to confess that this tendency to over-accuse himself is accompanied by a tendency to understate the happiness and charm of his life:

> If, without thinking about it and by an involuntary movement, I sometimes hid my deformed side and depicted my good side, these reticences have been well compensated for by other more bizarre reticences which often made me remain more assiduously silent about the good than about the evil. This is a peculiarity of my temperament which it is quite excusable for men not to believe but which, entirely unbelievable as it is, is no less real. I have often told the evil in all its baseness. I have rarely told the good in all its charm and I have often been completely silent about it because it honoured me too much and because in making my Confessions I would appear to have made my eulogy. (55, see also *Confessions* 381, 404, and *Dialogues* II, 154-55)

With this remarkable statement Rousseau explicitly affirms the truth of what had heretofore been merely a conspicuous possibility: so determined is he not to make an apology or eulogy, Rousseau errs on the side of the bad. Rousseau concludes the "Fourth Walk" with an account of two incidents that demonstrate his noble character, but put others in a negative light – the sort of incidents he says that he typically excluded from the autobiographical works, or for which he tends to apologize. In the course of suggesting that such behavior was not uncommon in his life, Rousseau exclaims "In weighing so carefully what I owed to others, have I sufficiently examined what I owed myself?" (58). With gravitas and humility, Rousseau admits that he erred in ornamenting his works with fictions that cast him in unduly negative light; even if his intentions were pure, he may have harmed himself with his own account, and his motto should have precluded such imaginative fancy (see 58-9). There is a compound irony at work in Rousseau's "Fourth Walk." The walk reveals, on the one hand, that he has done himself grave injustice with his autobiographical works precisely because in composing them he was so diligent to be just to everyone else. But beyond this, Rousseau has embellished his

logically rigorous discussion of unabashed dissembling with a pretty "fiction" about his own naiveté. He is clearly a master ironist.

Rousseau's unorthodox understanding of truth-telling provides him with an expansive set of 'honest' narrative options, and this mitigates the tension between the rhetorical dimensions of the work and Rousseau's repeated claims to truthfulness. A great deal of artistic liberty is afforded by his schema, and is employed to great effect in the *Confessions*.

II. Impressions of Misery

It is difficult to describe Rousseau's *Confessions*. On the one hand, it is a seminal work in the history of literature, being the first autobiography of its kind. Rousseau's *Confessions* have a secular tone, and the work is more systematic and thorough than the autobiographical writings of Montaigne or Vico. It is a deeply personal work, which serves to guide a general shift in late modern philosophy away from the 'external world' and towards introspection as the core of inquiry and understanding (see Hartle, 153-157 and Wright, 79-82). In its allegorical complexity, and, for example, its parallelism to *Emile* and the *Second Discourse*, it reflects the full philosophic rigor of its author (see Kelly 1987, 13-24, 78-98, and 248; Stelzig 2000, 41-47). On the other hand, readers of the *Confessions* must also acknowledge the exasperating dramatic tenor of the work: by far the most prominent dramatic feature of the *Confessions* is Rousseau's anticipation of future misery and misfortune. The narrative of the book is periodically interrupted with anxious warnings about impending events, and these infuse the work with a perpetual sense of foreboding. Since such *pathos* is an uncontroversial fact about the work, it is not necessary to discuss it here at length. In what follows, I highlight a few examples of this

familiar aspect of the autobiography, before turning to outline the narrative difficulty that it informs.

We are confronted with emotional outcries on page one, where Rousseau describes his birth. He describes the moment pithily: "I cost my mother her life, and my birth was the first of my misfortunes" (6). In describing his parent's legacy, Rousseau continues: "Such were the authors of my life. Of all the gifts which Heaven had bestowed on them, a sensitive heart is the only one they left to me; but it had brought about their happiness, and brought about all the misfortunes of my life" (7). He concludes Book 1, pathetically, "Ah! Let us not anticipate the miseries of my life! I will be occupying my readers only too much with this sad subject" (35). Despite such protestations, Rousseau is seemingly unable to resist any opportunity to do this vey thing. The whole of Part I (comprised of Books 1-6) is peppered with apprehensive statements about the misfortunes that lie ahead. Rousseau refers, for example, to the misfortunes that will overwhelm the end of his life (73, see also 113, 124, 172, 204, 213, 220, 221; these lists are hardly meant to be exhaustive), to the "fatal moment" that would cause all his future misfortunes (218, see also 97, 132), and to the sweetness of the past from the miserable vantage point of the present (111,156). And while scattered provisos such as these color the tone of Part I, they come to pervade Part II. Rousseau, writing after a two-year hiatus shrouded in some mystery, opens Part II by highlighting the contrast between the two parts. Rousseau says that, while he wrote the previous section with pleasure, the second half offers him "nothing but misfortunes, betrayals, perfidies, saddening, and heart-rending remembrances" (234). Throughout Part II, he continues to foreshadow the cruel consequences of narrated events (222, 287, 293, 336, 375, 493, 455, 542), to regret the narrated past with nostalgia (367), and to speak of his present vantage point abysmally (243, 291, 455, 493). The *Confessions* proceeds, then, as a long wind-up to culminating

disaster, written from the perspective of an aged, dejected, and nostalgic Rousseau.[46] It is clear that this is a man to be pitied.

Such a characterization of the work – as a story of dramatic decline – is the orthodox characterization, but it is ultimately inadequate, for it ignores, among other things, a complex circularity in the work's narrative construction (this narrative complexity is just one of the several more cerebral features of the work that correspond to the "rational" separation that constitutes Rousseauian compassion). The Rousseau who composes Part I of the work regularly foreshadows miserable periods of his life that in Part II he will recall with a spirit of fond reminiscence and nostalgia, and this calls into question the reliability of the initial *pathos*-filled rendering. Here it is helpful to consider some dates. Rousseau starts writing the *Confessions* in 1763 in Switzerland and continues to write Part I in England (see 151, 153, 178); as we have seen, from the outset of the narrative he prefigures doom. Therefore, it is the reader's reasonable assumption that the Rousseau of 1763 was already effectively *in* the pit of miseries he anticipates for the young Jean-Jacques. And yet, when Rousseau finally arrives to recount the period in Switzerland, in the course of the narrative of Part II (composed in 1769 back in France, see 512 and 521), misery is still something that he *anticipates* for the Jean-Jacques of 1763. It is not something that has yet come to pass. Indeed, the last book of the

[46]As many have noted, Rousseau uses various narrative devices to illuminate the complexities attending autobiography. The most prominent of these is his habit of "splitting himself into character and narrator or person and author in the *Confessions* and its sequels" (Kelly 1987, 9), which allows Rousseau to acknowledge the problem of accurate self-representation across time. In reading and interpreting the *Confessions*, therefore, it is important, but sometimes awkward, to distinguish between Rousseau the author and Rousseau the subject of the narrative. One useful practice is to identify the character/subject of the *Confessions* as Jean-Jacques as opposed to Rousseau the author. The distinction coincides to a degree with Rousseau's own usage in *Rousseau, Judge of Jean-Jacques*, though there the distinction is not so much between the historical Jean-Jacques and the "present" Rousseau, but the public figure Jean-Jacques and Rousseau himself. For other accounts of Rousseau's psychological "doubleness," see MacCannell (1974, 280-282), Howarth (1974, 363-367), Weintraub (1975, 822-834), Hartle (1983 3-4, 12, and 23), H. Williams (1983, 7 and 74), and Wright (76-88).

Confessions contains the same suspenseful foreshadowing as the rest of the work (see 493). Within the *Confessions*, then, Rousseau never quite delivers on the much-anticipated culminating episode of deep suffering and *pathos.*

Rousseau's narrative passes through the period of anticipated crisis (in 1762) without fanfare, and finishes on a now-familiar note of suspense. The most obvious solution to this difficulty would be to say that Rousseau begins his work in the midst of unhappiness, which allows him to predict the future miseries of Jean-Jacques from the outset. Then, as he continues to compose his *Confessions*, his circumstances worsen such that what previously appeared to be the height of misfortune starts, in hindsight, to look relatively tolerable. This is the explanation implicitly offered by Cranston, though he does not outline the narrative difficulty explicitly: "It has to be remembered that Rousseau wrote the later chapters of the *Confessions* at a time when he took the bleakest view of everything and everybody. In the summer of 1764 he was in a mood to think kindly of his fellow men, even though he had started to develop sciatica" (1997, 91). Thus, the anticipated misery of the early parts of the work not only comes to pass, it is surpassed in the course of a general descent that culminates during Rousseau's trip to England, and later translates into the full-fledged paranoia that many believe tainted the rest of his *oeuvre*. The author of Part II, now angst-ridden back in France, retains no hope that the miseries will cease. This explanation of the dramatic trajectory of Rousseau's *Confessions* – let us call it the "shifting perspectives" hypothesis – has some immediate appeal since it seems to account for some of Rousseau's narrative choices, and satisfies our suspicions about Rousseau's psychological well-being in those later years.

My reasons for rejecting such an explanation is twofold. On the one hand, there are several inconsistencies, operating over various narrative time-frames of the text, that are too conspicuous to be explained by Rousseau's changing moods. On the other, there

is a counter-narrative of persistent happiness in the *Confessions* that contradicts the story of radical decline.

Let us consider two specific examples of narrative inconsistency, before turning in the next section to Rousseau's happiness. First, early on in Part I, Rousseau melodramatically describes a later return to Geneva as a time of deep confusion in which he is hardly master of himself, being "so continuously besieged" that he could not find a moment for a visit to one of his childhood homes; he would have watered the ground with his tears, but he could not even find time for this (21). When he comes again to narrate this period in the course of Part II, however, we discover that he is indeed besieged, but by adorers (329), and that he also finds time to spend a week travelling in complete leisure through the countryside with Thérèse and some other friends. Furthermore, he tells us: "I did not lose either the taste or the habit of my solitary walks, and I often made rather long ones on the banks of the lake, during which my head did not remain idle since it was accustomed to work" (331). The two accounts are perhaps not in utter contradiction, since he is besieged in Geneva, and truly does not have time to visit his childhood homes, but the contrasting affect is obvious. Such flagrant incongruity can hardly be explained by the changing historical circumstances of the author. It is, I would suggest, an example of one of the ways in which Rousseau indicates that his apprehensive language is not always sincere.

The second major piece of textual evidence against the "shifting perspectives" hypothesis involves an inconsistency within Part I. In Book V, which was written in England in 1766, Rousseau mentions his *present* happiness, and suggests that this condition of enduring happiness has encompassed the past ten years or so of his life. The statement reads as follows: "I know no study in the world that mixes better with my natural tastes than that of plants, and the life that I have been leading for the past ten

years in the country is hardly anything but a continuous herborization, in truth without object and without progress" (151).[47] On its own this statement is innocuous enough, and describes a period of time in which circumstances accorded with Rousseau's well-known partiality to idleness and botany. But consider the period that Rousseau is describing: the years span 1756-66, the very decade that Rousseau has anticipated for the whole first part of the *Confessions* as full of misery and misfortune, and which he will continue to foreshadow as such through to the end of the book. It is a period which includes his departure from the Hermitage, his departure from Montmorency, his departure from Môtiers, and his eventual flight from the continent. What is more, this is the period in which Rousseau wrote *Julie, Emile, The Social Contract,* the *Lettre to d'Alembert,* and began his *Confessions*. As he later remarks on this period, "if one counts and measures the writings I did in the six years I spent at the Hermitage and Montmorency, one will find, I am sure, that if I wasted my time during that interval, at least it was not by being idle" (339). Clearly Rousseau's is a strange understanding of herborization.

Between Parts I and II, and within Part I, then, we see the same incongruity with regards to misfortune and happiness that is replicated in the narrative structure of the whole work. These internal contradictions, however, partly because they span narrower time frames, are hard to attribute to sloppiness or moodiness. My suggestion is that they provide a clear indication that the constant anticipation of misery is "fictional."

[47] Meier brings our attention to a similar comment in a note from the period of the *Rêveries*: "To fulfill the title of this collection properly, I would have had to begin 60 years ago: for my entire life has hardly been anything but a long *reverie*, which was divided into chapters by my daily *promenades*" (Meier 315, from *Ebauches des Rêveries*, 1 OCP I, 1165).

III. Habits of Happiness

A fuller account of the meaning of Rousseau's *Confessions* has to contend not only with the problems of unfulfilled *pathos* and narrative circularity, but also with the fact that the bulk of the narrative is quietly imbued with the author's near-irrepressible good cheer, and speaks to the dominance of intellectual activity in his life. The full paradox of the work emerges from the fact that intervals of life which Rousseau foreshadows with anxiety *typically* pass not only *sans souci,* but even delightfully, in the course of the narrative itself. A humorous narrative pattern emerges early on in the *Confessions*. Already in Book I, gloomy expectations are juxtaposed with cheerful eventualities, and this pattern is sustained throughout the entire text, including Part II. It is a work replete with subtle comic reversals that, once recognized, betray the healthy and humorous constitution of their author. More often than not, misfortune provides the opportunity for the activities – like his so-called "herborization" – that constitute Rousseau's well-being. To illustrate this feature of the work, I will again proceed by way of examples. Though it is beyond the scope of this project to provide a systematic account of the character of Rousseau's happiness, the consideration that follows helps to lay the groundwork for such an undertaking.

A clear early instance of the pattern of contrast can be seen when we compare the conclusion of Book I with the opening of Book II. By way of concluding Book I, Rousseau suggests that his fateful decision to run away from Geneva marks the beginning of all his subsequent misery (36-37). At the beginning of Book II, however, Rousseau calls our attention to the contrast between how Jean-Jacques should have felt (according to Rousseau's hindsight), and how he experienced the decision at the time:

> While I was still a child, to leave a half-finished apprenticeship without knowing my profession well enough to live from it; to abandon myself to the horrors of poverty without seeing any means of leaving it; to expose myself to all the temptations of vice

> and despair in the age of weakness and innocence; to seek from afar evils, errors, snares, slavery, and death, under a yoke much more inflexible than the one I had not been able to bear; that was what I was going to do, that is the perspective I should have envisaged. (38)

Rousseau goes on to describe Jean-Jacques' excessive and unruly hopes:

> How different was the one I depicted for myself! The independence which I believed I had acquired was the only feeling that influenced me. Free and master of myself, I believed I could do everything, attain everything: I had only to leap in order to soar and fly through the air. I would enter safely into the vast space of the world; my merit was going to fill it: at each step I was going to find feasts, treasures, adventures, friends ready to serve me, mistresses eager to please me: by merely showing myself I was going to occupy the universe with me: not however the whole universe; I would exempt it to some degree, I did not need that much. (38)

It remains to be seen which account of a life – that anticipated retrospectively by the author Rousseau or that envisioned by the young protagonist Jean-Jacques – more closely resembles the life that unfolds before us (though we do know that at least ten of the subsequent years were spent in happy herborization). All that is clear at this point in the *Confessions* is that, at the time of his departure for Geneva, Jean-Jacques did not experience the anxieties which Rousseau, looking back, thinks he probably ought to have.

Soon, however, we get a glimpse of Jean-Jacques' manner of coping with the first item in Rousseau's list of prospective miseries: poverty. Again Rousseau is upfront in articulating the difference between, on the one hand, what Jean-Jacques might have been expected to feel upon finding himself alone without any money, and, on the other, what actually came to pass:

> It is easy to judge what a sudden revolution should have been made in my ideas, when from my brilliant projects of fortune, I saw myself fall into the most complete misery, and when, after having deliberated in the morning over the choice of the palace in which I would live, I saw myself in the evening reduced to sleeping in the street. It will be believed that I began by abandoning myself to a despair all the more cruel since the regret for my faults must be inflamed when I reproached myself that all my misfortune was my own work. Not at all…The first feeling I tasted was that of the freedom I had recovered. (59-60)

Given Rousseau's belabored warnings, as readers we might reasonably expect that soon hereafter Jean-Jacques finds himself genuinely hard up. Instead he spends the subsequent while (to the end of Book II: twelve pages that describe at least a few months) exploring Turin at his leisure, tasting the "sweetest as well as the purest pleasures of love in their first fruits" with a young tradeswoman Madame Basile (a lively brunette), and working for a time in the home of the Comtesse de Vercellis.

Jean-Jacques' financial situation reaches its nadir in Book IV. Rousseau describes Jean-Jacques' experience of real poverty and hunger, as well as of various other indignities, as he makes his way back to Switzerland after a brief visit to Paris (141-3). Acknowledging that "to be reduced to passing the night in the street is assuredly to suffer" (141), he then continues: "What is surprising is that I was neither uneasy nor sad in this cruel condition. I did not have the slightest care about the future […] lying under the stars [I slept] stretched out on the ground or on a bench as tranquilly as on a bed of roses" (141). Rousseau goes on to describe at some length his reveries during this period. He attributes his ability to endure such hardships to his peculiar imagination: "my imagination never shows itself more agreeably than when my condition is the least agreeable, and that, on the contrary, it is less cheerful when everything is cheerful around me. My unruly head cannot subject itself to things. It cannot embellish, it wants to create" (144). With this remarkable statement about the power of his imagination, Rousseau offers a glimpse of just how extraordinary his perspective is. It is a general and conclusive statement, not one confined to Jean-Jacques' period of poverty, and it describes a creative personality that is buoyed by unpleasant circumstances. Misfortune, Rousseau suggests, fuels Jean-Jacques' imaginative powers, which are able radically to transform unpleasant experiences. This is the first of several psychological peculiarities that, as we will see, help Jean-Jacques enjoy circumstances that would be unbearable to

most people.[48] The creative imagination in reverie should also be kept in mind as an important source of Rousseauian happiness.

Throughout Part I, Rousseau emphasizes that it is important to understand the development of Jean-Jacques in order to understand what he became. We have seen how Jean-Jacques dealt with poverty; let us now turn to look at Rousseau's temperament in more general terms. He says in Book IV, "there is a certain succession of affections and ideas that modify those that follow them and which one must know in order to judge them well" (146), and over the course of these early books, we come to suspect that typically the succession of Jean-Jacques' "affections and ideas" bespeaks a rather robust character who deals exceptionally well with adversity. And while Rousseau insists that between Part I and Part II there is a tremendous break, such that the happiness described in Part I can be understood as a happy dream compared to his later life, he also insists that Books V and VI describe the period in which his temperament became formed and fixed. In Book V we read:

> Here begins an interval of eight or nine years from my arrival at Chambery to my departure for Paris in 1741, during which I will have few events to tell, because my life was as simple as it was sweet, and this uniformity was precisely what I needed most to finish forming my character, which continual disorder kept from being settled. It is during this *precious* interval that my mixed and incoherent education acquired some consistency *so as to make me what I never again ceased to be through the storms that were waiting for me.* (Emphasis added, 150)

In Book VI we learn that this "precious" interval involves a great deal of physical duress accompanied by periods of convalescence; he concludes, "true happiness cannot be described, it is felt, and is felt all the better when it can be described least, because it does

[48] Consider, in this regard, the description Rousseau provides of the dreadful illness he encounters while at Les Charmettes (191-194). Even this, however, was not enough to demoralize Jean-Jacques, who became increasingly devoted to study and learning during this period, and enjoyed some of the happiest years of his life under conditions of extreme illness (see 194-199). For evidence, however, that some of Rousseau's claims about his physical hardship may have been "fictional," see Cranston 1997, 90.

not result from a combination of facts, *but is a permanent condition. I repeat myself often, but I would repeat myself still more, if I said the same thing as many times as it comes to my mind*" (emphasis added, 198). We will return to explore the implications of the fact that, according to Rousseau, true happiness is indescribable. Just as astonishing is that, when Rousseau describes his fixed character towards the end of Part I, it is one of permanent happiness and well-being – a state of mind that continually calls itself to mind, and which therefore cannot be expressed in writing.

In Part II Rousseau returns to the refrain of anticipated misery. And yet (!) the pattern of robust happiness in the face of misfortune continues quietly through to the end of the *Confessions*. Several examples spanning Rousseau's actual years in Venice, Paris, Montmorency, and Neuchâtel illustrate the stubborn persistence of this pattern.

In Book VII of the *Confessions*, we learn of Jean-Jacques' failed venture as a secretary for the French ambassador in Venice in 1743 (248-276). Jean-Jacques finds the work pleasant enough, and claims to work dutifully and with pleasure despite the disdain he feels for the ambassador (253). Soon, however, Jean-Jacques provokes the envy and resentment of the ambassador and his underling Vitali. Rousseau recounts in some detail how he was wretchedly conspired against and deprived of all the honors attached to his station and was driven to demand his own dismissal (258-262). An impassioned description of the episode leaves the reader with the initial impression that things in Venice must have been very trying indeed for the noble and devoted Jean-Jacques. And yet, having recounted the story of Jean-Jacques' rise and decline as secretary, Rousseau lingers for another ten pages to briefly recount how he was feted by the rest of French in Venice upon his dismissal; then he decides it would only be appropriate to say something of "the famous amusements of that City, or at least about the very small share I took of them during my stay there" (263). Though Rousseau earlier asserts that, aside from a few

distractions, Jean-Jacques made his duties into his only pleasures (257), we soon learn that his very small share of distractions involved daily trips to the theatre (259), Sunday Vespers, and weekly music rehearsals with musicians from the symphony (in addition to a few significant encounters with Venetian women). Rousseau concludes the discussion of Venice with a beautiful tribute to his friend Ignacio Emanual de Altuna ("Wise of heart as well as head, this man knew men and was my friend. This is my entire answer to anyone who is not," 276). In Venice, the heterogeneity of Rousseau's leisure comes to light as a further source of happiness.

When he arrives back in Paris, Jean-Jacques renounces all ambition (and not for the last time), but the pattern of foreseen miseries and actual happiness persists. Instead of pursuing public affairs, Jean-Jacques settles into a quiet life (having met his longtime companion Thérèse)... and composes an opera in three months (279). He is soon hereafter drawn back into Parisian society, and back into zealous work habits. Once again Rousseau locates the starting point of Jean-Jacques' long chain of misfortunes here (293), and once again Jean-Jacques seems to enjoy the period in Paris a great deal. His chief complaint is that he does not have sufficient time to devote to his work because of his rising popularity (308). Eventually, therefore, he retires to the Hermitage, for his kind of work requires "meditation, leisure, tranquility" (340). As we have seen, he must have enjoyed a great deal of tranquility during this time, judging from his productivity. Throughout this period, while on the one hand Rousseau tends to complain of the constant burdens of social life, on the other he describes how Jean-Jacques accommodates these burdens without much strain (346, 367). He compensates for his growing dissatisfaction with his fellows through imaginative escapes: "seeing nothing existing that was worthy of my delirium, I nourished it in an ideal world which my creative imagination soon peopled with beings in accordance with my heart" (359).

Though occasionally Rousseau bemoans the fact that fate has limited him to an imaginary happiness (see 362), at other times he expresses immense satisfaction with these "sweet reveries," and acknowledges that they inspired the works he most enjoyed composing (*Julie* in particular, was inspired during Jean-Jacques' time at the Hermitage, which in turn influenced his impassioned, real-world love for Madame d'Houdetot, see 362, 365, 368, 370, 373). Again and again, our philosopher proves capable of overcoming even the worst ordeals of civilized life.

The same juxtaposition of moods is found in Montmorency: at first Jean-Jacques is very unhappy there (410-414), and then, true to form, he experiences a reversal of fortune that staves off his imminent demise (414-421). He explains that during this period he lived an "even and peaceable enough life; having been deprived of the charm of excessively lively attachments [he] was also free of the weight of their chains" (421); he then digresses for a six-page list of his newfound acquaintances in Montmorency (422-428; see 501-505 and 512-515 for similar lists). In addition, then, to imaginative reverie and a plurality of pleasures, friendship and the writing life emerge as key sources of Rousseau's happiness.[49] We are invited to ask ourselves: is this a man to be pitied?

Suffice it to say, Jean-Jacques' ability to overcome adversity is generally understated by the narrator. Rousseau does not fail to mention periods of stability and happiness, but he does nothing rhetorically to foresee or highlight such intervals – which always come as narrative surprises, but in fact make up the bulk of the life he describes. This becomes most obvious in the final books of the work, when Jean-Jacques is at his

[49] I agree with Marks' suggestion that Rousseau's rather social presentation of his own happiness (here, and in the ideal conditions Rousseau imagines for himself in Book IV of *Emile*) goes some way towards undermining the strictly individualist understanding of natural man that we find in Part I of the *Second Discourse* (see Marks, 2002, 501-502). But it also seems to me possible that Rousseau's deepest attachments to others tend to exist in his mind (I speculate that Rousseau considers himself a great friend of Plato's, for example), and so on some level I take his individualism to be rather robust (and, also, I would add, terribly isolating and of questionable general value).

most vulnerable. We see, for example, the perfect calm with which he finally departs from Montmorency under threat of arrest: he is most confident and self-assured precisely at the moment of his greatest difficulties (481). He arrives in Neuchâtel and in no time at all has settled back into a schedule of steady work (521). When, after several years in Môtiers, Jean-Jacques is forced to flee again due to the extreme disapproval of the Swiss public, he remains nearly unaffected, much to the chagrin of the surrounding mobs: "I nevertheless continued to take walks calmly in the midst of hoots, and the taste for botany […] gave a new interest to my walks and made me scour the country while botanizing without being alarmed by the outcries of all that rabble, whose rage was only irritated by this cool-headedness" (528). As the end of the *Confessions* draws near, we see him happy once more enjoying such activities on Berne island (537-9), before being forced again to depart. The book concludes on a note of despair and looming misery…

IV. Rousseau's Careful Subjectivity

What are we to make of the conclusion of Rousseau's *Confessions*? Rousseau leaves his reader with the impression that events recounted in Book XII lead immediately to the worst period of his life, and the tone of the whole work suggests that he has not since escaped these miseries. The autobiography, thus read, is tainted with the anxieties of the ever-worsening authorial present – in keeping with the shifting-perspectives hypothesis outlined earlier. But on the other hand, we have the persistent happiness that, for all of Rousseau's premonitions, the work seldom fails to disclose. The question, then, is whether the pattern of presaged misfortune followed by robust well-being can be carried through beyond the end of the *Confessions,* as a general pattern for Rousseau's life. Ought we to take the concluding premonitions of the work at their heart-rending word, or to trust what we have learned in the book about Rousseau's robust good humor? The

evidence continues to pile up in favor of the latter. I have already explored how Rousseau's expansive definition of truth-telling conforms with such a ploy, and we have seen how the pattern of the work reveals a persistent happiness. Next, I will consider how, within the pages of the *Confessions*, Rousseau playfully describes several idiosyncrasies of character that further account for the subjective unevenness of his story. Several of these have already been mentioned, and include, for example, his peculiar habit of exaggerating the bad aspects of his character at the expense of the good, and his inability to describe true happiness. In what follows, I explore this latter characteristic further, before turning to Rousseau's peculiar temporal relationship to misfortune. I then turn to discuss the matter of external evidence for my reading of the work.

Rousseau's insufficient ability to describe his own happiness is a quiet but recurring theme of the *Confessions*, but the point is made especially vividly in a passage from Book IV describing his travels by foot as a youth. The passage is worth quoting at length, as it is especially beautiful:

> Never have I thought so much, existed so much, lived so much, been myself so much, if I dare to speak this way, as in these travels I have made alone and on foot. Walking has something that animates and enlivens my ideas: I almost cannot think when I stay in place; my body must be in motion to set my mind in motion. The sight of the countryside, the succession of pleasant views, the open air, the big appetite, the good health that I gain from walking, the freedom of the tavern, the distance from everything that makes me feel my dependence, from everything that recalls my situation to me, all this disengages my soul, gives me a greater audacity in thinking, throws me in some manner in to the immensity of beings in order to combine them, choose them, appropriate them at my whim without effort and without fear. I dispose of all nature as its master; wandering from object to object my heart unites, identifies with the ones that gratify it, surrounds itself with charming images, makes itself drunk with delightful feelings. If I amuse myself by describing them to myself in order to stabilize them, what vigor of brushwork, what freshness of coloring, what energy of expression I give them! It is said that all this has been found in my works, though they have been written toward my declining years. Oh if those of my early years had been seen, those I composed and never wrote. […] I did not foresee that I would have ideas; they came when they pleased, not when I pleased. They did not come at all, or they came in a crowd, they overwhelmed me with their number and their strength. Ten volumes a day would not have been enough. (136)

In light of the power of this description, we might well wonder whether Rousseau is not exaggerating the limits of his pen. The passage also captures the active and creative character of Rousseau's contemplations: to Rousseau, composing and contemplating were not fundamentally different activities, and even writing is not far from the meditative bliss of his walks. Rousseau describes these years as full of activity (work, reading, mathematics, botany, chemistry, anatomy, music, and leisure in the country, see 152-153), but also as the "sweetest repose divided between work, pleasure, and instruction" (153). As he narrates the years between Jean-Jacques' arrival at Chambéry and his departure to Paris, Rousseau "will have few events to tell, because life was as simple as it was sweet" (150). The suggestion is not just Rousseau's now familiar claim that the experience of happiness is incommunicable, but also that simplicity and sweetness make for uninteresting narrative. He would love to indulge himself in writing about his period of indescribable happiness, but fears that prolonging this "very touching and simple narrative" to his pleasure would bore his readers immensely (189). Far from indulging himself, Rousseau insists on his moderation on behalf of the weary reader (197), explaining all the while that happiness is indescribable (198-200; see also 189, 361, and 437). Despite the surprisingly frequent happy interludes that occur in *Confessions*, the suggestion is that they represent a mere fraction of the moments of this kind that composed Rousseau's actual life, not to mention the endless pleasant intervals he spent recollecting them. Were it not for concerns about his audience, and the limits of his pen, Rousseau would hardly mention his misfortunes at all!

Rousseau's autobiographical writing is further shaped by his mature mind's peculiar relationship to the past and future (see Wright 2006, 82-86). Remarkably, we learn early on in Book VI, Rousseau's memory willingly retraces only pleasant subjects,

but his imagination tends only to foresee misery. Regarding the period at Les Charmettes, for example, Rousseau's memory provides infallible comfort for the present:

> My imagination, which always went forward in my youth and now goes backward, makes up for the hope I have lost forever by means of these sweet remembrances. I no longer see anything in the future that tempts me; only returns to the past can soothe me, and these returns, so lively and so true in the epoch about which I am speaking often make me live happily in spite of my misfortunes. (189)

While Rousseau's mind has much facility remembering past happiness, he has great difficulty recalling negative events, and brings them to mind only with some effort. Speaking at the beginning of Part II, Rousseau explains:

> Far from sharpening the bitterness of my situation by these sad recollections, I ward them off as much as much as I can, and often I succeed in doing so to such an extent that I cannot find them when I again need to. This facility of forgetting evils is a consolation which Heaven has arranged for me amidst those which fate was to heap up on me one day. (233)

In a later passage, Rousseau elaborates: "It is surprising how easily I forget past evil, however recent it might be. As soon as it has happened its remembrance returns to me weakly and passes away without difficulty" (490). This peculiar habit of mind goes some way towards explaining the character of the *Confessions*, which so seldom describes actual episodes of unhappiness.

Rousseau's selective amnesia, however, is related to a seemingly dreadful species of foresight. The remembrance of past unhappiness fades, Rousseau explains, "every bit as much as its foresight frightens me and troubles me as long as I see it in the future" (490); "my memory, which retraces only pleasant objects, is the happy counterweight to my frightened imagination which makes me foresee only cruel futures" (233). The character of Rousseau's foresight depends on the extent of his knowledge of what is to come, and his mind is much more excitable in conditions of uncertainty. We learn that misfortune does not trouble Rousseau much at all when it happens; what is far worse, he

explains, is its anticipation (473). A vivid example of such an episode comes in Book XI, where Rousseau describes his departure from Montmorency. He offers the following explanation for his perfect peace of mind at this point of greatest upset:

> My cruel imagination, which ceaselessly torments itself by foreseeing evils that do not yet exist, diverts my memory and keeps me from recalling the ones that do not exist any longer. There are no longer any precautions to take against what is done, and it is useless to be concerned about it. In some ways I consume my unhappiness in advance. The more I have suffered by foreseeing it, the easier it is for me to forget it; while, on the contrary, since I am ceaselessly occupied with my past happiness, I recall it and ruminate, so to speak, to the point of enjoying it all over again when I want to. […]
>
> From the day of my departure I so perfectly forgot everything that had just passed […] that I would not even have thought about them again on my whole trip, except for the precautions I was obliged to take. (490 - 91)

While we cannot deny that the cruelties of Rousseau's imagination are real, it speaks to Rousseau's amusing turn of mind that his unhappy thoughts are rarely vindicated even in the most extreme circumstances, and when they are, are soon forgotten.[50] What is still more remarkable and humorous is that Rousseau comes to regard even this tormenting habit of mind to be *heureuse,* or fortunate (490). His good-naturedness is irrepressible.

Though Rousseau treats his particular habits of mind as idiosyncratic, it is nonetheless true that they contribute a great deal to the artfulness of his self-disclosure by providing various compelling rationales for its distorted character. If he constantly anticipates misery in the *Confessions*, but seldom experiences it, this is because his mind fails to remember unhappiness; if he experiences persistent happiness, but fails to describe it at length, it is because happiness is indescribable in words; if he privileges the bad at the expense of the good, it is again the result of his idiosyncratic temperament.

[50] Rousseau specifically denies that he torments himself with thoughts about the misfortunes done him by his enemies (see 490). See also *Dialogues*, II.153: "By counting in advance on the ill he fears, he removes its greatest bitterness. When it happens, he is ready to bear it, and if it doesn't happen, that is something good which he relishes with all the more joy because he wasn't counting on it at all." See too Rene Girardin's beautiful account of Rousseau's characteristic tranquility in such circumstances (Trousson 2004, 255), as well as statements by Saint-Germain (171), Mercier (202), and Menetra (205-206).

This is all beyond mere coincidence: it is evidence of Rousseau's carefully calculated rhetoric.

A question does arise here, however, concerning the compatibility of my reading of the *Confessions* with the historical record. Whether or not the Rousseau depicted above is consistent with history is doubtless an important question, the full answer to which would take us well beyond the scope of this dissertation. What we do know is that the evidence is varied enough that it is inconsistent with Rousseau's surface story of steady and irremediable decline.[51] My reading of the *Confessions* calls for a fresh look at the historical record, in keeping with the following remark by Chamayou:

> Most of the time, testimonies about Rousseau ignore the historical facts in order to establish a truth about the public figure – one conforming to that which his works fashioned in the spirit of his readers, and also conforming to the image he wanted to give of himself after the appearance of the *First Discourse.* (2009, 51; translation my own)

Two related interpretive possibilities hereby emerge. First, we must consider the likelihood that the record has been substantially affected by the rhetoric of the autobiographical works. The second, more radical possibility is that Rousseau's whole way of life was devoted to this same artful self-creation that is on display in his autobiographical writings. These are not mutually exclusive possibilities, and there is good evidence on both fronts. That Rousseau's beguiling authorial colors have often been

[51] Consider the most relevant example: the period immediately following the departure from Switzerland, which supposedly informs the *pathos* with which Rousseau concludes the *Confessions*. Rousseau spends several weeks being fêted in Strasbourg; when he receives a pass through Paris, he spends nearly each day among visitors in high spirits (see Cranston 1997, 144-156). His time in England is enjoyable for a long while, and he makes some friends there (Damrosch 2005, 412-417). Though the break with Hume and subsequent departure is surely a low point, and the two subsequent years are upsetting, the historical record does not depict the chain of unalloyed misfortune that Rousseau prefigures in his autobiography. Rousseau's time at Tyre is tranquil enough that he is able to begin work on the *Confessions* again, and his habit of walking and botanizing continue as before. Consider the letter to Davenport from October 1767: "*Vous voulez savoir comment je pass mon tems. À peu pres comme à Wootton. J'habite un séjour fort agréeable où je vis solitaire autant que je puis, et broutant mon foin comme à l'ordinaire sans rien craindre et sans rien desirer*" (You want to know how I spend my time. About the same as [I did] in Wootton. I am living in a very agreeable locale, where I live in solitude as much as I can, and bide my time in the usual way, without fearing or desiring a thing, *Correspondance complète* XXXIV, 6158).

blended somewhat unthinkingly into portraits issued by contemporaries and biographers is indicated by, for example, the frequency with which such writers express surprise at Rousseau's good humor and reversals of fortune.[52] It is also evident in the regularity with which his contemporaries mention their familiarity with the autobiographical works, and their oft-expressed surprise at either the content of the autobiographical works, or at Rousseau's charming temperament.[53] With respect to the second possibility, Rousseau's capacity for dramatic effusions and Quixotic manners is well-known.[54] Examples from the *Confessions* abound, but they are also there in the historical record.[55] The question, in fact, is not whether Rousseau indulged in intentionally dramatic gestures, but rather concerns the extent to which such conduct permeated his life. For our purposes, however, it is necessary to leave aside these difficult questions to explore the reasons guiding the rhetoric of the autobiographical works.

V. Justice and Self-Disclosure

The suggestion that Rousseau systematically created an exaggerated public persona ultimately demands a defense in the form of an explanation. What could Rousseau

[52] For instances in which the biographer is unduly surprised by Jean-Jacques' ability to recover from unhappy events, see Damrosch 2005, 294, 345, 366, 382, 404, 462, and 463; Cranston 1997, 3, 57, 86, 91, 93, 107, 120, 137, 144, and 169; Trousson 1989, 276, 297, 358, 374, 383, 415, 416, 417, and 421.

[53] In Trousson 2004, see 169, 176, 188, 199 (Goldini: "he does not treat himself very well in the *Confessions*"), 202, 220, 231, 232, 242, 245, 247, 255, 275. The most charming example of surprise at Rousseau's good charm is surely the account of Mme de Genlis (Trousson 2004, 193).

[54] Indeed, I would hardly be the first to suspect Rousseau of living rhetorically. Many reports, by friends and foes alike, suspect Rousseau of engaging in theatrical behavior with a view to his reputation. One particularly perplexing episode occurs at the Comédie–Française (Trousson 2004, 195-197). In Trousson 2004 see also 220, 227 (a fascinating statement by Claude-Joseph Clos), and 242. See also Damrosch 2005, 312 for a description of Rousseau's "ostentatious humility."

[55] The most striking example from the *Confessions* is when Rousseau becomes "Vaussaure de Villeneuve" the music teacher and composer in 1730 in Lausanne, to particularly comic effect (123-128). In life, Rousseau publishes the *Nouvelle Eloise* in such a manner that the lines between truth and fiction are intentionally blurred (see Cranston, 195). Consider too the dramatic aspect of his Armenian dress, and his theatrical intention to deposit the *Dialogues* on the altar of Notre Dame (see Cranston, 183-184).

possibly have had to gain from showcasing his unhappiness and cloaking his well-being? By way of conclusion, I consider how Rousseau's particular choice of public mask is consistent with his justice-driven understanding of truth-telling, his rhetorical presentation of compassion, and the goals of his broader philosophical project.

Rousseau's most obvious goal in the autobiographical works is to address some of the common charges against him, but recall that the kind of absolution he seeks is to be distinguished from the self-defense of a Socrates. This is in keeping with the charges leveled against Rousseau, which are more social than legal, and can be reduced to arrogance, misanthropy, and hypocrisy. Together these charges contribute to the larger overriding charge of being a dangerous and morally corrosive influence. We have seen how far Rousseau goes in defending the sentiment of compassion as the foundation of social life in his works, and in defending an ethics grounded on the "inner sentiment" of the heart (especially in the speech of the Vicar). Compared to his modern philosophic predecessors, Rousseau's works are temples to conventional morality. The passionate pleas of Rousseau's self-portrait also serve his goal of absolution exceptionally well. With his oft-repeated expressions of weakness, ill-health, and victimhood, the charge of arrogance is subtly undermined: far from overestimating his own powers and excellence, Jean-Jacques is the hapless victim of the corrupt social world. Rousseau similarly turns the charge of misanthropy on its head. Jean-Jacques is not the hater, but the hated; if he must remove himself from the cruelty of modern society and live apart, it is because he suffers too much from his unrequited natural love of man, not to mention his vicious persecutor; it is delicacy and weakness of temperament that keep Jean-Jacques from facing his accusers in the court of society life, not misanthropy. Finally, Rousseau's frank willingness to acknowledge his worst personal faults and misdeeds throughout the autobiographical works undercuts the charge of hypocrisy, for hypocrisy involves saying

one thing and doing another, but Rousseau admits everything bad openly. Far from posing a danger to mankind, this unhappy, sick, persecuted, loving, naturally good but weak, man comes to light as a humble and sincere lover of mankind (see Meier 2010, 312-313). As Starobinski demonstrates, the *Confessions* might even be mistaken for a "manifesto from a member of the third estate" (*Transparency,* 185), in keeping with Rousseau's politics.

The emotional tenor of the *Confessions* serves to reform Rousseau's authorial reputation; it also solidifies his autobiographical legacy by making the work more enjoyable to a broader audience. Rousseau suggests throughout the *Confessions* that to be loveable one must be flawed. Consider what he has to say about his friend Gauffrecourt: "That man who was so charming nevertheless had his flaws, just as others do, as will be seen below; but if he did not have them perhaps he might have been less lovable. To render him as interesting as possible it is necessary that one have something for which to pardon him" (179). The reflexive implications of this statement are evident, and Rousseau is well aware of the kind of written material likely to engage widespread interest (see *Letter to M. d'Alembert*, 18-20). He knows that emotional appeals are more pleasant to most readers than, say, drawn-out descriptions of intellectual well-being; as we have seen, he repeatedly apologizes for how boring he fears the passages dealing with his happiness will be to his readers, but never expresses similar concerns about the bawdier or more emotionally excruciating portions of his narrative. Ultimately, then, Rousseau becomes a beneficiary of his own teaching on compassion. Since compassion is pleasant, an emphasis on Jean-Jacques' suffering heightens the enjoyment of the reader.

If Rousseau thinks it will be more pleasant for his readers to read about his flaws and the unfortunate events of his life, his dictates of truth-telling also require that such disclosures in no way be harmful to justice. Here again it is helpful to recall our

discoveries from Chapter 1. We learn from Rousseau that pity is typically both pleasant and useful. It is pleasant because, though it initially involves a painful identification with the other, it then includes a psychological return to the self that is pleasurable because as it fuels one's relative sense of well-being. With his own unhappy example, then, Rousseau fuels his readers' sense of relative happiness and wholeness. For this reason, many readers will simply enjoy the experience of reading about someone so hard-done-by. Furthermore, by depicting the harshest dimensions of his life in the foreground, Rousseau helps his readers by thwarting their potential amour-propre and envy. With his rhetoric, Rousseau makes sure that his life – a life manifestly devoted to the arts and sciences – does not look particularly worthy of imitation, since it is a life that he thinks most of his readers are unsuited for, and which would therefore be harmful for them (recall, again, *First Discourse* 21-22, *Preface to Narcissus* 190-195, and Meier 2010, 305-309). Finally, by so vividly portraying the most extreme pathologies of his temperament, Rousseau may also make his more imaginative readers aware of similar tendencies in themselves.[56]

Rousseau's *pathos*-filled self-disclosure serves to rehabilitate his reputation, and to make the works more appealing and useful. A typical reader also comes away from the autobiographical works with a new sense of compassion for Rousseau's peculiar mode of existence. Thus, his rhetoric further serves the cause of justice by implicitly recommending a new object for society's compassion: the much-maligned bohemian artist-thinker. The suggestion that Rousseau aims to promote cultural sympathy for men of science and the arts may seem far-fetched in light of his general skepticism regarding

[56] Rousseau's tendencies, for example, to foresee only dangers, or to second-guess the motives of everyone around him, may be disturbances typical to the modern civilized mind. By using himself to illustrate such problems, Rousseau alerts his reader to pathologies to which they might be susceptible—and then demonstrates his own freedom from the effects of them.

their social value, from the *First Discourse*, to the *Letter to M. d'Alembert,* and beyond, but it is important in this regard to note just how different sympathy and toleration are from honor and accolades. The former are compatible with the skepticism and distrust towards the arts and sciences that Rousseau promotes, while the latter are not. The pitiable public persona Rousseau creates through his autobiographical works helps to inspire a new kind of intellectual freedom grounded on tolerance, rather than on honor.

As Kelly (2003, 1-28) and Darnton (1985, 73) argue, Rousseau worries that his sophisticated contemporaries invariably worked on behalf of the despotic ancien régime, and thinks that the Enlightenment prejudice in favor of intellectualism threatens to undermine serious thought (see also Strauss 1947). As Ruth Grant suggests, "one of Rousseau's central political aims was to alter the standards of ethical judgment so that people would come to revile what they had hitherto admired and to admire what they had previously held in contempt" (1993, 142). Grant focuses on Rousseau's development of the ideal of integrity, and his depiction of the corruption that comes with intellectual progress, vanity, and personal dependence. But she exaggerates Rousseau's anti-intellectualism (see, for example, 149); a major part of Rousseau's aim is to secure a middle ground for intellectual activity that is not the special object of either public contempt or of public admiration. Such a position of sympathy, toleration, and non-oppression towards men of letters is also consistent with Rousseau's conduct throughout life.[57] His position seems to be that, given modern Enlightenment conditions, intellectual

[57] In the *Confessions*, for example, Jean-Jacques is especially solicitous when it comes to the well-being of his persecuted contemporaries (such as Diderot, Palissot, and Morrellet); he reserves his highest praise for Madame de Warens, with her love for activity and personal freedom (41), for M. Simon, whose studies he so admired (119), for the French (because of their literary tastes—though he admits to affecting disdain for them, 152), for his friends Altuna ("As long as I have existed, I have not seen anyone aside from myself who was tolerant except for him," 275), and for George Keith (the Lord Marshal, see 500-501). Rousseau also admits that toleration and public concord were some of his "secret motives" (366), commenting on the impending danger of a civil war "in which the cruelest intolerance was at bottom the same on both sides"

and artistic activities should not be actively encouraged, because, on the one hand, they are spheres that are inherently appealing to the vain, and so tend to be morally corrupting, and, on the other hand, they have become so naturally appealing and powerful that there is no need to affirm them. In modern times, according to Rousseau, the arts and letters need gatekeepers, not peddlers. The representatives of this class should strive to appear mundane and innocuous, not flashy and ostentatious. This is not to say that no protection is needed for this would-be class – Rousseau's life is testament to the problem of persecution in modern times – but it is to suggest that state protection of intellectual freedoms has to be accompanied by authorial responsibility.

There are many advantages, then, to the emotional foreground of Rousseau's autobiographical portrait. To do justice to Rousseau's purposes and achievement, however, it is also necessary to consider whom it was that he was masking. Just as we saw how Rousseau's passionate teaching on compassion, rationally considered, leads to the surprising, and potentially subversive, insights into pity's psychological structure, a probing investigation of Rousseau's *pathos*-filled self-presentation leads to surprising discoveries about his true character. A full treatment of this subject would require a systematic study of Rousseau's happiness and its sources. As I have indicated in the preceding, I think such a study would involve a reconsideration of the some of the concepts associated with a Rousseauian way of life, including, among Rousseau's plurality of enjoyments, imaginative reverie, botany or "herborization," idleness, walking, friendship, and writing/composition.[58] As Meier indicates, the true character of

(referring here to "philosophers" and Christians). My suggestions here are also in keeping with Rousseau's support for religious toleration in *The Social Contract,* IV.8.

[58] On Rousseauian idleness/laziness and reverie, see *Confessions*, 95, 97, 153, 169, 241, 337, 338-9, 534, 544, and 537; on botany see 151, 537, and the "Seventh Walk"; on Rousseau's attitudes towards writing and study, see 151, 194-195, 227, 240-41, 343, 344, 365, 414-15, 420-21, 430, 432, 437, 476, 508, 521, 476, and Meier 2010, 313; on walking see 136, 144-145, 344, and Cranston 1997, 86-87. On Rousseau's happiness, see Meier 2010, 314-321.

Rousseau's existence is difficult to access: "Rousseau neither gives a direct view nor shows the integral form of the activity that sustains his life and founds his eccentricity. He discloses it only in the medium of alienation and fragmentation, spectrally refracted and laid out in parts; and it remains the reader's task to fit them together into one whole and integrate them into one movement" (2010, 311). My subject here, however, is not so much the specific character of Rousseau's existence as it is how his rhetoric of suffering serves to obscure his well-being, whatever its specific character, and, again, why he deems such hiddenness necessary.

What could he possibly have had to lose from disclosing the fact that, despite the persecution (and the constant flood of friends and admirers), he spent a great deal of his life in active and contented solitude? From our current vantage point, it is not so difficult to grasp the utility, for Rousseau, of disguising his happiness: for everything he stands to gain in delineating his weakness and misfortune, he stands to lose in discussing his full strength and well-being. In each discussion of his happiness, well-being, and superiority, he risks exacerbating his reputation for conceit; if Rousseau's is at bottom a solitary happiness grounded on self-love, he is easily mistaken for a misanthropist; if he speaks of his happiness in the same breath as persecution, charges of hypocrisy loom nearer; if his happiness is active and ambitious, with a straight-forward description of it, he risks drawing attention to his own dangerousness, as well as to the unsavory subject of human inequality. Finally, according to Rousseau's own reflections on the psychological effects of envy and ambition, it is not clear that he could have disclosed the truth about his happiness and self-fulfillment openly without endangering himself and his audience.

First, let us consider the potential dangers to himself more carefully. While it is perhaps impossible to prove that such concerns were Rousseau's own, it is telling that, over the course of the *Confessions*, he does offer several examples of men and women

endangered and/or ruined by the envy, resentment, and overall confusion of their peers. Consider, for example, his short description early in the book of the fate of Father Caton, a monk whom Rousseau admired for his generosity and liberality:

> Since I will not have anything more to say about this poor Father Caton, let me complete this sad story in two words. The other monks, jealous or rather furious at seeing a merit and an elegance of morals in him that had nothing of monastic scum, acquired a hatred for him, because he was not as hateful as they were. The Leaders conspired against him and roused up the young monks who envied his place, and who previously did not dare to look at it. (156)[59]

Rousseau speaks of his own fate in Venice in similar terms, referring to the envy and hatred incurred by "the upright eye of a decent man" and the extent to which such envy can be turned to slander when the object of hatred is not just good but virtuous (see 258). He will occasionally allude to his elaborate efforts to disguise his own supremacy of character, and to needing to write in such a way that he might be "pardoned" for seeing further than his contemporaries on matters concerning the happiness of the human race, and of his fatherland in particular (340). Such examples illustrate what Rousseau feared could happen if he were too forthcoming about his happiness (and, perhaps additionally, about his virtue, which is a subject that deserves much further discussion, but is beyond my subject here).

Rousseau's guardedness may thus be grounded in simple prudence; it could also reflect his perpetual concern with justice, and hence with the well-being of his readers. Indeed, is not clear, according to Rousseau's own reflections on the psychological effects of envy and ambition, that he could have openly disclosed the truth about his happiness and self-fulfillment without endangering his audience. Rousseau is attuned to the

[59] The rest of the passage is worth comparing to the trajectory of Rousseau's own life. Compare also Rousseau's conjectures about the resentment of fellow-servants at the home of Madame the Comtesse de Vercellis (68). See Chamayou 64-66 for a discussion of the dangers inherent to humor, and its complex relationship to cynicism.

alienating dangers posed by fictitious characters (see Barber 1978, 82-86; Trilling 1983, 59-67; Kelly 1999, entire; Bloom 1960, xi-xxxiv), and he wishes to be no such exemplar – not because he does not consider himself worthy, but precisely because he does not believe his kind of excellence to be popularly attainable. To the extent that Rousseau does mean to be a positive role model, therefore, he works to exemplify a preference for wholesome, rural ways, and a passive happiness available more broadly. Presumably, Rousseau recognizes that his works promote cultural rusticity, perhaps even cultural vulgarity, but he sees this as a small price to pay for the safeguarding of the genuine cultural elite from modernity's many sophisticates and vain pretenders.

Seen in this light, Rousseau is possessed of a generous, if patronizing, modesty that serves to save readers from dangerous hopes and mistaken choices. He, however, indulged his own dangerous hopes with great success. In the end it is sufficient to note that Rousseau, in rare but important moments, admits that he considers himself to be the best of men (433), admits to having a naturally happy inclinations that serve him well (490), spends much of his time contemplating not only plants, but also the future of all mankind in their justice and virtue (see *Confessions*, 218, 221, 237, 285 and 430), and entertains vast ambitions beyond the grave (see *Confessions*, 228 and 336). He leaves it to his more ambitious readers to piece together a fuller picture of the sort of man he was: not essentially fragmented, but a complex unity; an idle man only in light of Rousseau's own unorthodox understanding of idleness. If Rousseau becomes an exemplar to these more active readers, it is not, presumably, because they have succumbed to the allure of a false idol of intellectual prestige. Rather, as Rousseau intended, it will be because they have, in studying his works, come to a genuine appreciation of the activities that he cultivated with so much vigor.

In the next chapter, I turn to investigate a very different perspective on Rousseau than the one I have given above. While my reading of Rousseau could be charged with excessive suspicion concerning Rousseau's means, and excessive credulity regarding his ends, amounting to an altogether too-convoluted presentation of the man, Nietzsche's take on Rousseau – at least at first blush – comes across as naïve about Rousseau's method, and excessively harsh about his motives. In the next chapter I consider what Nietzsche had against *pauvre* Jean-Jacques.

Chapter 3: Rousseau's Blood on Nietzsche's Pen?

Friedrich Nietzsche is in many ways the antithesis of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. A fierce critic of the French Revolution, and the democratic waves that swept Europe in its wake, Nietzsche, writing a century later, sought in response to reinvigorate the aristocratic elements of the European psyche. Famous for his vivid depiction of the 'Last Man,' his description of life as *will to power*, his hopes for the coming *Übermensch*, his concerns about modern nihilism, his personal stance "beyond good and evil," and his declaration that "God is Dead," Nietzsche's legacy also includes a scathing critique of Rousseau. In this chapter I trace out and analyze the various dimensions of Nietzsche's evaluation of Rousseau. A consideration of Nietzsche's scattered judgments of Rousseau is helpful to our purposes for a number of reasons. First of all, it provides a useful transition from the discussion of Rousseau's thought to that of Nietzsche's: through Nietzsche's lens we catch a glimpse of Rousseau in historical context, and in studying Nietzsche's remarks on Rousseau, we are also introduced to the various periods of Nietzsche's own shifting thought. Second, and more substantively, we begin to recognize the scope of Nietzsche's indebtedness to Rousseau, which derives, I argue, from his careful reading of Rousseau's *Confessions*. Knowing that Nietzsche read and understood Rousseau's autobiography prepares the way for our own reading of *Ecce Homo*.

Nietzsche's remarks about Rousseau are scattered throughout writings spanning his entire corpus. They provide a unique window into Nietzsche's own philosophic development, and reflect general trends we see emerge in his thought as a whole. Nietzsche's corpus is traditionally broken down into three distinct chronological periods – early, middle, and late – and each of these is defined by particular stylistic features and substantive concerns. Though at times Nietzsche commentators overemphasize the

differences between the stages of Nietzsche's thought, the division is affirmed in Nietzsche's own published reflections, and provides a useful means by which to categorize and discuss the dynamic movements in his thought.[60] While others have made similar forays into Nietzsche's confrontation with Rousseau, some of which coincide with and help to supplement my own (see especially Ansell-Pearson 1991, 25-52 and Merrow 2004, entire), there is a general tendency to underestimate the extent to which Nietzsche read and understood Rousseau.

The author of the foremost comparison of Rousseau and Nietzsche, Keith Ansell-Pearson, suggests, for example that "Nietzsche had neither a subtle, nor a sophisticated reading of Rousseau's thought, of its complexities and paradoxes" (1991, 16 and 22). Basing his suggestions on Nietzsche's explicit mentions of titles by Rousseau, Ansell-Pearson suggests that Nietzsche's reading of Rousseau is limited to the *Emile* and the *Confessions*, and possibly to *Julie* (1991, 20 and 234n7). Thomas Brobjer, the foremost expert on Nietzsche's reading habits, corroborates this suggestion with evidence from Nietzsche's library, where the only work by Rousseau is one dog-eared copy of the *Confessions* in nine volumes (see Brobjer, 2008, 62, and 145n7). Both authors agree that Nietzsche's assessment of Rousseau is overwhelmingly and consistently negative (see

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[60] A good overview of the standard breakdown of the various stages of Nietzsche's writing can be found in the Nietzsche entry to the Stanford Encyclopedia of philosophy (2011). For Nietzsche's own treatment of his authorial history, see *Ecce Homo*, III, and the preface of the *Genealogy of Morality*. While Nietzsche does draw clear distinctions between the different periods of his life and writings, he also cautions us to treat his *oeuvre* as an organic growth, and so, presumably not ridden with contradictions. See, for example, GM *Preface* 2, where Nietzsche, speaking of the thoughts that occupied him in *Human All Too Human,* says:

> They were already in essentials the same ideas that I take up again in the present treatises – let us hope that the long interval has done them good, that they have become riper, clearer, stronger, more perfect! *That* I still cleave to them today, however, that they have become in the meantime more firmly attached to one another, strengthens my joyful assurance that they might have arisen in me from the first not as isolated, capricious, or sporadic things but from a common root, from a *fundamental will* of knowledge, pointing imperiously into the depths, speaking more and more precisely, demanding greater and greater precision. For this alone is fitting for a philosopher.

Brobjer 2008, 62 and Ansell-Pearson 1991, 30 "Nietzsche's estimation of Rousseau was not to undergo any major change in his later work"). Kathleen Merrow, whose 2004 article on Nietzsche's reading of Rousseau is attentive to Nietzsche's rhetoric, agrees with Ansell-Pearson and Brobjer about the negative character of Nietzsche's evaluation of Jean-Jacques, but disagrees with them about the extent of his familiarity with Rousseau's works, and suggests in passing that, when Nietzsche caricatures Rousseau, it is not based on misunderstanding, but rather on a genuine understanding of Rousseauian *ressentiment* (2004, 243n6). In general, then, these commentators agree that Nietzsche paints a negative portrait of Rousseau, and that it even has the guise of a caricature. As we will see, this interpretive outcome is not altogether inaccurate or surprising, for throughout much of his *oeuvre,* Nietzsche's remarks about Rousseau are highly rhetorical and seem to bespeak a general ignorance regarding the subtlety of Rousseau's thinking. My suggestion, however, is that a careful reading of some of Nietzsche's claims about Rousseau in the middle period discloses a more profound and positive side to Nietzsche's assessment of Jean-Jacques, and, furthermore, that the remarks of the middle period can also help us to understand the reasons for the harsh words Nietzsche has for Rousseau later on.

According to my reading, then, Nietzsche's treatment of Rousseau basically unfolds as follows. His early mentions of Rousseau (in works like the *Birth of Tragedy* and *The Untimely Meditations*) tend to be rich but slightly elusive, and often ambiguous. They nicely set the stage for his more developed treatment of Rousseau in the middle period. The middle period is generally described as Nietzsche's "positivist period."[61] In

[61] As many scholars have now noted, Nietzsche's interest in science and methodology transcended the middle period, such that the "positivist" label is somewhat superficial. See Montinari, 1982, 50-79 for a treatment of some of the ways in which Nietzsche carries on his enlightenment project into the final period. See also Lampert (1995).

keeping with a greater emphasis on science and methodology, here Nietzsche's discussions of Rousseau continue to reflect a great deal of ambiguity on Nietzsche's part, but they also attain a greater degree of clarity and precision – which means that his major criticisms of Rousseau come into sharper focus. There is also a real refinement to some of Nietzsche's comments about Rousseau in this period. One of the central arguments of this chapter is that when these rare but powerful statements are considered carefully, they reveal Nietzsche's profound respect for Rousseau, and even, I argue, his deep personal indebtedness to Rousseau's *Confessions*.[62] As far as I know, this suggestion is altogether novel, and it is fitting that it should be made in a study Rousseau and Nietzsche's rhetoric and autobiography. That said, it is complicated significantly by the picture Nietzsche paints of Rousseau in the final works. Nietzsche's final period is marked by a drastic change of literary style, and an amplification of his rhetoric, and here the subtlety that we see in his earlier treatments of Rousseau all but disappears.[63] Instead, Nietzsche offers scornful remarks about Rousseau that have proven influential, but which primarily reflect only one dimension of Nietzsche's overall assessment: the remarks of the final period

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[62] Again, this is a controversial suggestion, since it is a matter of debate among scholars whether Nietzsche ever even read Rousseau. As we have seen, scholars do tend to concede that Nietzsche may have the *Confessions*. That said, my argument for Nietzsche's having read the *Confessions* derives primarily from my reading of Nietzsche, though the suggestion is buttressed by his having kept a copy of it in his library. Brobjer (2008) has devoted considerable attention to Nietzsche's reading, and provides many interesting insights into the philosopher's particular habits, and his possible influences, but he concedes that no argument about Nietzsche's influences deriving from Nietzsche's library alone should be taken as conclusive. My basic sense, based on the passages that I am considering in this chapter, is that Nietzsche probably read several of Rousseau's works more or less carefully, including the *Emile*, but that he read Rousseau's *Confessions* repeatedly and painstakingly. This does not contradict the archival work done by Brobjer. Brobjer provides evidence that Rousseau read the *Emile* and the *Confessions*, but it does seem to me that he underestimates Rousseau's influence on Nietzsche (see Brobjer, 2009).

[63] Nietzsche's final period, beginning with *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* is known for its harsh and (especially post-Zarathustra) negative tenor. We will explore the question of Nietzsche's intentions in this period more fully in the next chapter. As far as Nietzsche's treatment others is concerned, Brobjer notes that in the final period, Nietzsche's philosophical reading seems to have been "more negative than positive" (95); his suggestion is that in the final period Nietzsche tends to read other philosophers instrumentally, for the sake of the critical "no-saying" that is so typical of the later works.

illuminate Nietzsche's evaluation of Rousseau's public teaching, at the expense of that teaching's philosophic core.

In this chapter I take up these stages of Nietzsche's evolving perspective on Rousseau. It proves to be a perspective worthy of all the layers and paradoxes of Rousseauian man.

I. The Early Period: Naive and Revolutionary Romanticism

Nietzsche's earliest references to Rousseau occur in his first published work, *The Birth of Tragedy,* and in the third "untimely meditation," *Schopenhauer as Educator*. Compared to some of the other philosophers and writers discussed in these works, Rousseau receives only fleeting attention, but even the few remarks Nietzsche makes are worth careful consideration. Though they are often enigmatic, Nietzsche's early statements about Rousseau, in addition to revealing important differences between the two thinkers, also illuminate themes that prove to be of lasting concern to Nietzsche. The differences he sees center primarily around their respective conceptions of nature; the other major theme lurking here is that of Rousseau's great practical power. As we will see, the two themes are related.

The *Birth of Tragedy* is a bewildering book, and even though Nietzsche mentions Rousseau there only once, some background on the text is helpful in understanding the reference. *The Birth of Tragedy* is a comprehensive effort to metaphysically explain and evaluate various essential phenomena of human existence, from the most elemental experiences of life under barbaric natural conditions, to the experiences of high poetic and scientific culture. As Nietzsche says in a later assessment of the work, it strives "*to look at science in the perspective of the artist, but at art in that of life*" (*Attempt at Self-Criticism*, 2). From the outset the work delves deeply into the structures of the psyche,

and explores the most basic of human needs and drives. Though eventually Nietzsche turns to assess science and contemporary culture (focusing on Socrates and Wagner in particular), one of the most memorable things about the work is Nietzsche's gripping interpretation of the "Apollinian" and "Dionysian" expressions of nature. While it is impossible to do justice to it here, in Nietzsche's discussion the Apollinian and Dionysian represent the two basic and oppositional "art impulses of nature" (BT 2), around which he envisions a whole, tension-ridden binary system. Nietzsche uses the Doric god Apollo to characterize the Greek idea of individuation and the self over and against the mass of undifferentiated humanity – an idea he thinks is best expressed in the young, strong Olympic gods. The Apollinian is associated with the visible realm, dreams, and appearances, with the visual and plastic arts, and with beautiful and powerful illusion. The Dionysian is best represented in and through music, and is closely identified with the older, wilder Greek divinities, as well as with everything barbaric. Against the Apollinian illusion of individuation, the Dionysian represents the primeval drive to intoxication, to a sense of total personal dissolution and unity with the world (as well as, then, the notion of personal annihilation). The two disparate art-impulses of nature exist in agonistic tension with each other, and, according to Nietzsche's account, come together in the highest synthesis in ancient Greek tragedy; the best tragedies combine the beautiful, lucid illusions of the Apollinian, with the terrors of Dionysian insight. The overwhelming message of the work is that science (represented here by Euripides and Socrates) tends to detach us from nature's deepest insights; the final parts of the work are devoted a potential renewal of tragedy through Wagnerian opera.

Nietzsche's brief mention of Rousseau occurs in section 3 of the work, in the midst of a discussion of the Homeric outlook. In a passage that will prefigure many of Nietzsche's comments about Rousseau, he is here associated with a modern, naïve, and

superficial understanding of nature that is contrasted with Schopenhauer's relative depth and realism. The opening sections of *The Birth of Tragedy* present a preliminary picture of the Apollinian and Dionysian, and an account of how they exist together in a tension-ridden but occasionally fruitful dialectic. After presenting a beautified and abstract, or "Apollinian," picture of the two art impulses in the first section of the work, Nietzsche moves on in section two to uncover more fully the Dionysian roots of all Apollinian culture. Whereas in section one Nietzsche only briefly mentions Schopenhauer's Dionysian insight into the "terrors" of human knowing, only to move on quickly to the delights of Dionysian intoxication, in section two Nietzsche repeatedly refers to the horrible Schopenhauerian terrors, the "witches brew" of "sensuality and cruelty" that get expressed in Dionysian festivals and which form the real roots of all Apollinian illusions. While in section one it seemed almost as though the two impulses of nature operated independently of one another, now Nietzsche makes it clear that the Apollinian and Dionysian are interdependent, and, more particularly, that the Apollinian celebrations of life that we witness in the works of Homer are life's creative response to life's even deeper brutality. "The Greek knew and felt the terror and horror of existence," Nietzsche informs us in section three, and even with this knowledge they yearned deeply for continued existence. It is in order to contrast the romantic impulse with this ancient outlook that Nietzsche brings in Rousseau:

> Here we should note that this harmony which is contemplated with such longing by modern man, in fact, this oneness of man with nature (for which Schiller introduced the technical term "naïve"), is by no means a simple condition that comes into being naturally and as if inevitably. It is not a condition that, like a terrestrial paradise, *must* necessarily be found at the gate of every culture. Only a romantic age could believe this, an age which conceived of the artist in terms of Rousseau's *Emile* and imagined that in Homer it had found such an artist Emile, reared at the bosom of nature. Where we encounter the "naïve" in art, we should recognize the highest effect of Apollinian culture – which always must first overthrow an empire of Titans and slay monsters, and which

> must have triumphed over an abysmal and terrifying view of the world and the keenest susceptibility to suffering through recourse to the most forceful and pleasurable illusions.

Nietzsche's suggestion is that the Rousseauian understanding of nature is superficial because it acknowledges only goodness where there are tremendous and dynamic destructive forces at work as well. It assumes the love of existence to be natural when it is merely the fortuitous outcome of a confrontation with the ugly and destructive elements of nature: Apollinian love of life is the outcome of a process of terrible suffering. The Romantic age, enchanted by Rousseau, longs for harmonious oneness with nature, but has lost sight of the truth about nature. Only with Schopenhauer is this truth regained.

This first, fleeting mention of Rousseau, then, is ambiguous. While Nietzsche suggests that world of *Emile* is incredibly naïve, he also calls the naïve in art "the highest effect of Apollinian culture," which is, in its way, a great compliment. And yet, instead of crediting Rousseau with bringing in a great naïve age of romanticism, he instead turns back to praise Homer. Homer, Nietzsche says, is "unutterably sublime"; in the Homeric world we witness the complete victory of Apollinian illusion, that "consummate immersion in the beauty of mere appearances"; Homer, not Rousseau, is the quintessential naïve artist. While Nietzsche acknowledges the power of Rousseauian romanticism, and its naiveté, he is not willing to praise it. He leaves us wondering whether he thinks Rousseau had the kind of encounters with nature's terrors that inform genuine Apollinian art. Was Rousseau himself naïve? Or is the implicit suggestion rather that Rousseau somehow went too far in propagating the naïve, Apollinian outlook – such that it became too detached from its Dionysian roots? Because there is only this one mention of Rousseau in *The Birth of Tragedy,* our thoughts on these specific question must remain speculative. It seems quite likely that Nietzsche himself was unsure about Rousseau at this early juncture.

The other mention of Rousseau in Nietzsche's early period is consistent with the presentation in *The Birth of Tragedy,* but is more substantial. Rousseau figures briefly but prominently in *Schopenhauer as Educator,* and, once again, provides an interesting point of contrast to the essay's title character (especially when it comes to their respective understandings of nature). Here too, some consideration of the context is in order.

Broadly speaking, the essay takes up the subject of education in the modern world, and suggests that Schopenhauer was an exemplary teacher. Very early on Nietzsche provides the following account of education, nature, and culture, which provides the standard by which to judge his treatment of Schopenhauer:

> Your true educators and formative teachers reveal to you that the true, original meaning and basic stuff of your nature is something completely incapable of being educated or formed and is in any case something difficult of access, bound and paralyzed; your educators can be only your liberators. And that is the secret of all culture: it does not provide artificial limbs, wax noses or spectacles – that which can provide these things is, rather, only sham education. Culture is liberation, the removal of all the weeds, rubble and vermin that want to attack the tender buds of the plant, an outstreaming of light and warmth, the gentle rustling of nocturnal rain, it is imitation and worship of nature where nature is in her motherly and merciful mood, it is the perfecting of nature when it deflects her cruel and merciless assaults and turns them to good, and when it draws a veil over the expressions of nature's stepmotherly mood and her sad lack of understanding. (1)

Interestingly, Nietzsche comes close here to emphasizing the goodness of the inner self when he suggests that education, and true culture, consists of an uncovering of the "basic stuff of nature." But subsequently Nietzsche shifts to a more ambiguous stance towards nature, reverting to language reminiscent of *The Birth of Tragedy*. Once again nature now has a dual impulse, and it is the job of culture to imitate the merciful mood of nature, and to veil over her cruelty and indifference. Culture and education serve to refine nature, which, like the Apollinian and Dionysian impulses, is dynamic and historically mutable.

In subsequent sections, Nietzsche turns to assess the modern situation, and in passages that anticipate Nietzsche's famous declaration of the death of God, he describes,

in effect, how the stepmotherly mood of nature is quietly gaining ascendance in modern culture. Though ultimately Nietzsche suggests that the situation could provide an opportunity for what is best in nature to emerge, first he digresses at length about the terrible state of "everything today" (4; 148). The picture Nietzsche paints here is desolate on all fronts. Among other things, he describes the immanent demise of religion, the hurriedness of modern life and lack of contemplative sensibility, the hostilities between nation-states, the power of the contemptible money-economy, and the corruption of the educated classes, who "grow daily more restless, thoughtless and loveless" (4; 148). No cultured man, Nietzsche continues, wants to admit to the "coming barbarism" because he has become so self-deceived and weak. On the other hand, and lurking behind this dull and unsavory surface of civilization, is an even more disturbing picture that recalls the darker side of Dionysian nature:

> There are certainly forces there, tremendous forces, but savage, primal, and wholly merciless. One gazes upon them with a fearful expectation, as though gazing into the cauldron of a witch's kitchen: at any moment sparks and flashes may herald dreadful apparitions. For a century we have been preparing for absolutely fundamental convulsions. […] Nowadays the crudest and most evil forces, the egoism of the money-makers and the military despots, hold sway over almost everything on earth. […] The revolution is absolutely unavoidable, and it will be the atomistic revolution. (4; 149-150)

To Nietzsche, modernity involves the brutal unraveling of all traditional sources of culture. It is a terrible picture.

Having invoked the language of the Dionysian "witches brew" of contemporary life, Nietzsche finally alludes to the need for an Apollinian solution. What is needed is a new way of guarding and championing *humanity,* or "the inviolable sacred treasure gradually accumulated by the most various races" (150). The very idea of humanity is in danger of being lost in the onslaught of modernity. Employing visual Apollinian language, Nietzsche asks, "Who will set up the *image of man* when all men feel in

themselves only the self-seeking worm and currish fear and have thus declined from that image to the level of the animals or even of automata?" His tone turning more hopeful, Nietzsche proceeds in his Apollinian task of interpreting the three most prominent images of modern man, who, he says "will no doubt long inspire mortals to a transfiguration of their own lives" (4; 150). The images of man Nietzsche has in mind are "the man of Rousseau, the man of Goethe, and finally the man of Schopenhauer" (4; 150).[64] Together these three have inspired and elevated modern men.

Nietzsche credits the image of Rousseau with having tremendous power: "the first image possesses the greatest fire and is sure of producing the greatest popular effect" (4; 151). Rousseau is praised as a great liberator of men (4; 151). As in *The Birth of Tragedy,* Nietzsche's assessment of the merits of Rousseau's influence remains highly ambiguous, and though it is clear that he means to praise Rousseau, the passage nonetheless betrays certain suspicions. Whereas previously Nietzsche raised questions about Rousseauian romanticism, here he speculates about the psychological sources of Rousseau's outlook and emphasizes the revolutionary character of his thought more emphatically:

> From the first [image of man] there has proceeded a force which has promoted violent revolutions and continues to do so; for in every socialist earthquake and upheaval it has always been the man of Rousseau who, like Typhon under Etna, is the cause of the commotion. Oppressed and half crushed by arrogant upper classes and merciless wealth, ruined by priests and bad education and rendered contemptible to himself by ludicrous customs, man cries in his distress to 'holy nature' and suddenly feels that it is as distant from him as any Epicurean god. His prayers do not reach it, so deeply is he sunk in the chaos of unnaturalness. Scornfully he throws from him all the gaudy finery which only a short time before had seemed to constitute his essential humanity, his arts and sciences of a refined life; he beats with his fists against the walls in whose shadow he has so degenerated, and demands light, sun, forest and mountain. And when he cries: "only nature is good, only the natural is human," he despises himself and longs to go beyond

[64] In the dramatic depiction that unfolds, each of Nietzsche's three images of man prove flawed in some significant respect, and none quite live up to Nietzsche's understanding of what is truly required in the education and cultivation of humanity; as Nietzsche will later admit openly, the essay is more about himself as an educator than it is about these others. See *Ecce Homo,* III *Schopenhauer,* 3.

> himself: a mood in which the soul is ready for fearful decisions but which also calls up from its depths what is noblest and rarest in it. (151)

What Nietzsche depicts in this dense passage is Rousseau's powerful critique of culture and his discovery of the goodness of non-human nature. Nietzsche shows considerable sympathy for Rousseau, and some knowledge of the his life's experience; he even reproduces for us some of the *pathos* of Rousseau's victimization. But in the context of *Schopenhauer,* with its emphasis on the import of culture for individual growth, Rousseau's reactionary rejection of civilization constitutes a major flaw – one which Nietzsche will raise again and again in later works. The suggestion seems to be that Rousseau's rejection of culture is grounded in reactionary self-loathing, and, furthermore, that it results in an oversimplification and romanticization of nature that makes man vulnerable to the brutal aspects of his natural condition. Romanticism prepares the way for violent revolution because it makes men naïve and hopeful about nature, while at the same time undermining faith in the cultural resources that provide protection to what is "essentially human" against the darker sides of nature.[65] That said, the presentation of this first "image of man" is of course not altogether negative. Nietzsche concludes his discussion enigmatically, suggesting that Rousseau's profound suffering at the hands of civilization allowed him to reach deeply into his soul and to retrieve "what is noblest and rarest in it";[66] he will also subsequently imply that Rousseau achieved a ravenous hunger

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[65] Nietzsche is hardly the first to blame Rousseau for the French Revolution. As Kathleen Merrow notes, "'*C'est la faute à Rousseau'* is one of the great stereotypes of nineteenth-century anti-revolutionary politics which Nietzsche's view would seem symptomatically to replicate" (2004, 228). On this theme and its relationship to Rousseau, see also Hannah Arendt (1965, 68-83; Arendt draws a clear link between Rousseauian compassion and revolution) and Ansell-Pearson (1991, 31-38).

[66] Nietzsche's description recalls Rousseau's own declaration in the *Second Discourse* that "it is to this ardor to be talked about, to this frenzy to achieve distinction which almost always keeps us outside ourselves, that we owe what is best and what is worst among men, our virtues and our vices, our Sciences and our errors, our Conquerors and our Philosophers, that is to say a multitude of bad things for a small number of good things" (Masters trans., 2:175).

for life (4; 151) reminiscent of his description of the Homeric hero of *The Birth of Tragedy*.

Nietzsche's understanding of Rousseau comes more fully into focus when it is seen in contrast with his depictions of Goethe and Schopenhauer. Goethe, for example, is credited with having a great nobility of soul and a good appreciation of the good life; he is a "contemplative man in the grand style." But because he lacks the active energy of Rousseau, Goethean man (though presumably not Goethe himself) is in some danger of degenerating into a reactionary philistine. In this light, Rousseau's effectiveness is impressive, even if Nietzsche disdains his goals.[67]

For his part, Schopenhauer is shown by Nietzsche to have been tremendously honest, and to have seen deeply into the realities of his time. Nietzsche describes how his writings provide a good mirror for the age. He adds, "it is certainly not due to a fault in the mirror if everything time-bound in his age appears as a disfiguring illness, as thin and pale, as enervated and hollow eyed, as the recognizable sufferings of his stepchildhood" (3, 146). Later, Nietzsche will liken Schopenhauer to the mocking Mephistopheles who distrusts everything in life (4, 152-153). Unlike Nietzsche's Rousseau, Schopenhauer understands the cruel side of nature (and not just that of culture) clearly, and is in a position to embrace life and inspire humanity in the specifically Nietzschean way disclosed in the *Birth of Tragedy* and invoked throughout *Schopenhauer*. But ultimately Nietzsche's presentation of Schopenhauer is also plagued with ambiguity. Some few points will have to suffice to illustrate this point. First, Nietzsche asks about Schopenhauer's capacity to embrace life at the end of section 3, but he leaves it manifestly unclear whether or not Schopenhauer actually did (3, 146). Nietzsche suggests

[67] Again and again in *Schopenhauer* Nietzsche emphasizes the need for the philosopher to have a practical impact. See, for example, sections 3 (145) and 7 (177).

that Schopenhauerian Man is a fit object of contemplation especially for the most *active* men because only they can see him without being harmed (4, 151), and then suggests that Schopenhauerian Man is, "frankly" helpful because he helps to stoke "our" anger (4, 152). Nietzsche early on refers to his positive *first* impressions of Schopenhauer (2, 136), and later on finds it necessary to provide an idealized Platonic Schopenhauer (4-5, 154-156). Finally, Schopenhauer is depicted as someone who embraced life in a heroic way (suffering unto truth, and ending in Nirvana, see 154-155), but who does not readily inspire and educate others (5; 156). By providing beautiful depictions of Schopenhauerian Man, and the kinds of insights that such a man could experience, Nietzsche explicitly hopes to inspire the practical movement that Schopenhauer never did in fact inspire. Nietzsche's hope in *Schopenhauer* is openly practical and active: he hopes to inspire modern men to devote themselves to the creation of great exemplars of humanity.[68] It is, needless to say, a theme that will return again and again in Nietzsche.

With Nietzsche's discussion of Schopenhauer, then, we gain further insight into Nietzsche's critique of Rousseau. While Nietzsche respects Rousseau's power as a philosopher, and hopes, in a very different way, to inspire a practical movement himself, he holds Schopenhauer up as his main model. This is partly because Schopenhauer had insights into nature with which Nietzsche does not, or will not, credit Rousseau – insights that are central to Nietzsche's own project. And while perhaps Nietzsche is being unfair to Rousseau, as we have seen in previous chapters, the *pathos* of Rousseau's self-portrait invites precisely the interpretation Nietzsche provides. Rousseau's own understanding of nature is far from straight-forward, but he nonetheless endorses the idea that nature is naturally benevolent, and his rhetoric certainly works, on the whole, against civilization

[68] This practical goal is an important point of continuity in Nietzsche's thought. For other explicit mentions of the active and calculated production of genius as *the* goal that animates Nietzsche, see *Schopenhauer*, 142, 159, 160-162, 177, 179, and 183 (where Nietzsche refers to the Platonic character of this goal).

and in support of pacified nature. His hints about nature's darker sides are buried deep in his work, and it is unclear whether Nietzsche saw these subtleties in Rousseau's works during the early period. What is clear is that Nietzsche thought that a more open approach was long overdue, with regards both to the true character of nature, and to the human need for culture.

II. The Middle Period

The Middle Period Take 1: Liabilities of Rousseauian Naturalism

In the writings of the middle period, Nietzsche continues to make occasional references to Rousseau, once again taking up earlier themes of nature and culture, and usually in a way that replicates the ambiguity of the earlier treatments. This sustained ambiguity is somewhat surprising, for Nietzsche's middle period is marked by a shift in interests and style, away from the poetry, flourish, and cultural thematics of the first works, towards an open embrace of science and enlightenment (reflected in the shift to aphoristic form). It is often referred to as his positivist stage, and it is a time where he openly identifies with Voltaire (dedicating his *Human All Too Human* to the *philosophe*).[69] As such, we might expect him to target Rousseau especially strongly in these works – Voltaire and Rousseau had at intervals been bitterly opposed to one another throughout their lives, standing at opposite poles of the enlightenment – and yet Nietzsche's discussions of Rousseau in the middle works, while they do serve to further sharpen his criticisms, also shed light on Nietzsche's deep respect for Rousseau. As I proceed with my discussion of Nietzsche's remarks about Rousseau, I will begin with a consideration of how the middle period can

[69] On Nietzsche's relationship to Voltaire, see Merrow (2004, 229), Jan Rehmann (2007, 7) and Brobjer (2009).

help us to better understand the themes that have already emerged – Nietzsche's sense of Rousseau's revolutionary streak, his outlook on nature, and his rejection of culture – and then I will spend some time considering Nietzsche's judgment of Rousseau's character.

Let us begin with Nietzsche at his most critical – where Nietzsche does indeed contrast Rousseau with Voltaire, and, with some irony, blames the former for his immoderation and praises the latter for his "moderate nature." This occurs in Nietzsche's treatment of the state in *Human All Too Human,* in the course of a series of aphorisms where Nietzsche praises graduated, progressive reforms over revolution. Nietzsche's critique of Rousseau here is a subtle one, and concerns what he calls "Rousseau's superstition" (HATH, §463). According to Nietzsche, Rousseau's belief in the primeval but "buried" goodness of human nature, and his consequent attack on the institutions of culture (society, state, education: all of which have "buried" nature), have together been the essential source of unrealistic revolutionary optimism. And yet the impact of this optimism has been almost wholly destructive. Under the sway of Rousseau's "passionate follies and half-lies," social orders have been overturned, and, while the "political and social fanatics" hoped, under the delusion of Rousseau, that the "proudest temple of fair humanity" would rise up of its own accord, the revolutions have instead brought about only "the resurrection of the most savage energies in the shape of the long-buried dreadfulness and excesses of the most distant ages" (HATH §463). Rousseau's superstition about the goodness of nature has unleashed nature's most dreadful energies, insofar as it has ruined the institutions that could actually support "*the spirit of Enlightenment and of progressive evolution.*" This spirit Nietzsche identifies with Voltaire. In his ironic conclusion to the aphorism Nietzsche too cries "*Ecrasez l'infame!,*" but now against the superstition of Rousseau. The message is clear: nature's darkest realities have surfaced, and it is time to conjure back the reconstructive forces of culture.

Nietzsche's outcry against Rousseau's naturalistic superstition is ironic in its contrast with Voltaire's immoderate outcry against theological superstition, but the critique of Rousseau's immoderation is nonetheless genuine. In aphorism 221 of *Human All Too Human,* Nietzsche discusses the cultural implications of Rousseau's naturalism at length, and elsewhere we can see how Nietzsche understands the moral and psychological consequences of Rousseau's naturalistic superstition. I will take each of these up in turn.

Aphorism 221 of *Human All Too Human* is called "The Revolution in Poetry," and it is a long, beautiful discussion of how naturalism has influenced modern dramatists and poets. In it, Nietzsche explores the histories and evolutions of various literary traditions, highlighting the depth and beauty of classical formalism over and against realism and naturalism. Nietzsche's overarching argument in the aphorism is that only the kind of restraint and precision that we see in ancient Greek poetry and in early modern French drama ("Franco-Hellenic art") can constitute true art. Though restraint and formalism at times seems arbitrary and artificial, Nietzsche explains, it is only through these that "one gradually learns to walk with poise even upon narrow bridges spanning dizzying abysses and brings the highest suppleness of movement home as booty" (§221). Naturalism, which involved the unshackling of all such restraints, leads to a kind of return-to-Rousseauian-nature in art that involved an influx of new forms, and the loss of the most impressive (and, incidentally, the most truly free and powerful) ones. Here Nietzsche praises Voltaire for his capacity to withstand the revolution in poetry, but then continues:

> Since [Voltaire's] time the modern spirit, with its restlessness, its hatred for bounds and moderation, has come to dominate in every domain, at first let loose by the fever of revolution, and then, when assailed by fear and horror of itself, again laying constraints upon itself – but the restraints of logic, no longer those of artistic moderation.

Thus, Nietzsche explains, naturalism has led to a dissolution of the power of art to moderate, and thus to truly form and educate, and he goes on to suggest that it may have even contributed to the brutalities of the modern military state. While Nietzsche acknowledges that new forms and energies have emerged from the unleashing of art, on the whole he worries that the new freedom will result in art's vulgarization: "all poets *must* [now] become experimenting imitators and foolhardy copiers, however great their powers may have been at first" (§103). All limitation has become unreasonable now, and this in turn makes everything more extreme. Nietzsche concludes the aphorism with a bittersweet tribute to Goethe, who, he suggests, recognized the problems of romanticism and in his later works attempted to revive the beautiful formalism of the Franco-Hellenic poets. But Nietzsche's final suggestion is, once more, that in the end Goethe lacked vitality – that his works merely imitated that which the Greeks and French practiced with authenticity.[70] This is how powerfully naturalism – "The Revolution in Poetry" – has undermined the edifices of poetic expression (on this theme, see also *Beyond Good and Evil,* §245).

Nietzsche criticizes Rousseauian immoderation for its contribution to the dissolution of cultural and poetic institutions and forms; he also, somewhat paradoxically, draws our attention to the concessions Rousseau sometimes makes to tradition – and in particular to Christian moral tradition – that end up contributing to still other varieties of immoderation. Part of Nietzsche's critique of Rousseau is that he perpetuates the sensibilities that sustain the Christian outlook (and which, therefore, help to sustain certain kinds of fanaticism). While on the one hand Rousseau's optimism about nature contributes to the unraveling of culture, Nietzsche also holds that Rousseau propagates

[70] See Montinari 1982, 54 for a fuller interpretation of this aphorism and its implications for the Enlightenment.

and supports the moral system that contributes to *bad* culture. This dimension of Nietzsche's critique emerges in selected aphorisms from *Daybreak.*

Aphorism 163, entitled "*Contra Rousseau,*" expresses this dimension of the critique through the articulation of a puzzle. Nietzsche begins with the following: "If it is true that our civilization has something pitiable about it, you have the choice of concluding with Rousseau that 'this pitiable civilization is to blame for our *bad* morality,' or against Rousseau that 'our *good* morality is to blame for this pitiableness of our civilization." According to Nietzsche, Rousseau blames civilization for the moral corruption of man; Nietzsche's own, more radical suggestion is that modern "good" morality is to blame for the pitiable character of modern civilization. Here, then, we get our first inkling of Nietzsche's deep disagreement with Rousseau about the goodness of modern morality as such. He continues: "Our weak, unmanly, social concepts of good and evil and their tremendous ascendancy over body and soul have finally weakened all bodies and souls and snapped the self-reliant, independent, unprejudiced men, the pillars of a *strong* civilization." The suggestion is that contemporary morality has ruined modern civilization. As such, Rousseau's attack on civilization is misbegotten, for it fails adequately to trace the causes and character of modern decay. Ultimately Rousseau's attack on culture is in the service of a moral outlook that is itself the source of contemporary ills; Rousseauian romanticism indulges and perpetuates the pitiable weaknesses of the modern outlook that have made civilization so weak, superficial, and hollow in the first place.

In a way, then, the romantic destructiveness of Rousseau is woefully incomplete, for his romanticism is its own form of Christian idealism. While Rousseau may have intended to "naturalize" Christianity (through, for example, his opposition to the doctrine of original sin, and his emphasis on the natural human conscience), Nietzsche still

considers Rousseauian naturalism to be something like a halfway house of idealism. In aphorism 17 of *Daybreak,* Nietzsche suggests that the Rousseauians "imagined themselves out of nature" when they fled society: "they were so fed up with one another they absolutely had to have a corner of the world into which man and his torments could not enter: they invented 'good nature.'" Rousseau's romanticism involved the denaturing of man's civilized side, and the perpetuation of old ideals. In the Preface to *Daybreak*, Nietzsche targets Rousseau explicitly as the "moral tarantula" who bit Kant and infected him with moral fanaticism, and then goes on boldly in the next aphorism to announce his own hostility to the "half-and-halfness" of all such "romanticism and fatherland-worship", as well as his disdain for "bridge-of-lies to ancient ideals," and every kind of "Christianness." As Kathleen Merrow puts it, "in Nietzsche's representation, Rousseau has perverted/diverted the future course of the Enlightenment into a continuation of Christianity by other means, translated into a possible heaven on earth of perfectible humanity based upon equality as its political principle" (2004, 227; see also Ansell-Pearson 1991, 4 and 41-49). The cumulative critique of Rousseau that emerges in the middle period, then, is complex but also rather pointed: not only does Rousseau contribute to the unraveling of the social and political orders that might eventually contribute to human progress, he manages to do this in a way that helps to buttress the very source of modern man's backwardness. Rousseau exacerbated the sources of modernity's ills, while undermining potential sources of strength and repair.

The Middle Period Take 2: Rousseauian Enigmas

At this point, what we have seen of Nietzsche's assessment of Rousseau in the middle period concerns his romantic understanding of nature and its negative implications for politics, culture, and morality, and from this perspective Nietzsche's account is still rather

lopsided: he seems focused almost exclusively on Rousseau's rhetorical surfaces, to the neglect of the subtler dimensions of Rousseau's thought. Aside from the accuracy of Nietzsche's evaluation of Rousseau's exoteric message, the only hint we have at this point that he has read Rousseau carefully is his occasional reference to Rousseauian "half-lies" and lying! In other passages from the middle period, however, which we will turn to now, Nietzsche alludes to some of the deeper and more hidden aspects of Rousseau's thought, and also reveals his high regard for the intensely personal character of Rousseau's philosophizing.

One passage that I have in mind (*Daybreak* §427) takes up the theme of nature in a manner reminiscent of the discussions in the early writings: it emphasizes the stark difference between the rosy romantic outlook of a Rousseau, and Nietzsche's own, more realistic view that acknowledges both the "motherly" and the "stepmotherly" aspects of nature. At first, the aphorism does not call to mind Rousseau. Its title is *"The beautification of science,"* and it begins with a long simile involving rococo horticulture – something which brings to mind the world of artifice and vanity that Rousseau so despised. Nietzsche's bold suggestion is that philosophy is to science what rococo horticulture was to nature: as rococo horticulture sought to beautify nature, so philosophy seeks to embellish science in order to make it entertaining and enjoyable. As the aphorism unfolds, it gradually becomes clear that Nietzsche attributes his 'rococo' definition of philosophy not to all philosophy, but to Rousseau's philosophy in particular. Embedded in the aphorism is the now-familiar suggestion that Rousseau's particular "beautification of nature" was excessively naïve, "motherly," and romantic – at thus at bottom excessively artificial and untrue, or "rococo."

As Nietzsche proceeds to illuminate the differences between ordinary horticulture and philosophy, we can see how his description of the latter suits Rousseau's philosophy

very well indeed, even while the former would not have been to his taste. Nietzsche proceeds as follows:

> [Philosophy] wants, as all art and poetry want – above all to *entertain*: but, in accordance with its inherited pride, it wants to do this in a more sublime and exalted fashion and before a select audience. To create for these a horticulture whose principal charm is, as with the 'more common' kind, a *deception of the eyes* (with temples, distant prospects, grottos, mazes, waterfalls, to speak in metaphors), to present science in extract and with all kinds of strange and unexpected illuminations and to involve it in so much indefiniteness, irrationality and reverie that one can wander in it 'as in wild nature' and yet without effort or boredom – that is no small ambition: he who has this ambition even dreams of thereby making superfluous religion, which with earlier mankind constituted the highest species of the art of entertainment. (§427, see also §530)

This is truly a remarkable passage, for it recalls some of the most radical and "hidden" statements that Rousseau makes about his philosophical activity and so-called botanizing, while it also provides an apt description of what Rousseau manages to accomplish through the poetic rhetoric of his various works. The kind of philosophy Nietzsche describes seeks to entertain – but is attentive to a select audience. The philosopher seeks to trick the mind's eye with "strange and unexpected illuminations," that involve "indefiniteness, irrationality" – think of the Savoyard Vicar! – as well as "reverie" (*Träumerei*), with the ultimate aim of allowing the addressees to "wander 'as in wild nature' and yet *without effort or boredom*" (this last line recalls the kind of lazy happiness Rousseau so often advocates). The suggestion that the philosopher dreams of replacing religion could also aptly apply to Rousseau, but Nietzsche continues to hold back the name until the final lines of the aphorism.

The final lines of aphorism 427 involve an interesting shift. Just as was the case in Rococo horticulture (or so I gather), Nietzsche says that, eventually the philosopher's beautification of science will run its course. At this point, he continues, there will be a cry for a return to "nature and the naturalness of science!" for, at last, the artificiality of the philosopher's beautification project will be discovered. This cry for nature and "natural

science" is also, it would seem, a cry for the truth about nature, for Nietzsche concludes the aphorism as follows: "With that an age may perhaps begin which will discover the mightiest beauty in precisely the 'wild, ugly' sides of science, just as it was only from the time of Rousseau that one discovered a sense for the beauty of high mountains and the desert" (§427). Here the contrast between Rousseauian "rococo science," and Nietzschean "wild" science emerges. While Rousseau was able to beautify certain parts of nature – high mountains and deserts, the solitary places – Nietzsche suggests that the mightiest beauty (*die mächtigste Schönheit*) might be discovered in the 'wild, ugly' parts of science and nature. Presumably this new philosophy would not be merely "without effort or boredom" like the old, but something both difficult and exciting – more tragic, perhaps, than romantic.

Nietzsche's brief discussion of "rococo horticulture" in *Daybreak* strikes me as a dense, ironic, and fitting tribute to Rousseau, and to the deeper meaning of Rousseauian botanization as it emerges in the course of the *Confessions* (and as we considered it in Chapter 2). It captures several essential dimensions of Rousseau's project – its deceptiveness, its agreeableness, its pseudo-religious quality – while playfully calling him out on the deep 'rococo' artificiality of his depiction of nature. Furthermore, in the course of Part V, we come to learn more about the philosophic significance of high mountains and deserts (see §429, 449, 469, 491, 521, and 554); Nietzsche even concedes that there can be wilderness lurking behind façades of quiet beauty (§502). This more than any other single aphorism signals to me that Nietzsche had a deeper understanding of and respect for Rousseau than has been indicated in the passages that we have looked at thus far, and it certainly reveals a deeper appreciation for Rousseau than one would surmise from Nietzsche's later works.

This suggestion about Nietzsche's appreciation for Rousseau is at once challenged and ratified by Nietzsche's several explicit discussions of Rousseau's character that are found in works of the middle period. On the one hand, Nietzsche makes psychological claims about Rousseau that recall his depiction of him as an oppressed and desperate victim in *Schopenhauer*; but, on the other, Nietzsche shows – especially in *Daybreak* – how Rousseau also resembles a godlike evil genius.

One of the most troubling but poignant statements Nietzsche makes about Rousseau in the middle period is a late aphorism of *Human All Too Human* called "*Sowing and reaping on personal inadequacies*" (§617). As the title of the aphorism intimates, it is about how "people like Rousseau" are able to use their "weaknesses, deficiencies, or vices as if they were the fertilizer of their talent." Nietzsche suggests that Rousseau's attacks on culture derive directly from his own experience, and thus that Rousseau's critique is poisoned by a personal bitterness that makes it more caustic. Nietzsche then goes even further than this, indicating that Rousseau may be motivated by resentment insofar as he "relieves himself" with his outpourings against society.[71] This theme of the illness of resentment is one that Nietzsche takes up at length in the later works, and which he continues to relate directly to Rousseau and his influence. Here, Nietzsche goes on also to attribute to Rousseau a genuine interest in the general well-being of society (he "thinks that he is seeking a cure that will directly benefit society"), but finally suggests that, in addition, Rousseau hopes to reap further personal benefits from the society he has transformed. This suggestion on Nietzsche's part concurs, in a way, with my suggestions in Chapter 2 about the various motives behind Rousseau's

[71] This is, in turn, an accusation that is commonly made against Nietzsche – a theme we will take up in Chapter 4. On Nietzsche's discussion of resentment and its relationship to Rousseau, see Merrow (2004, 230-232) and Ansell-Pearson (1991, 8) – both of whom suggest that Rousseau and Nietzsche were motivated by resentment.

rhetoric of victimization. But Nietzsche offers little indication as to whether or not he thinks Rousseau's "sowing and reaping" is justified, nor does he suggest that Rousseau's sufferings were exaggerated for rhetorical effect.

What Nietzsche describes as Rousseau's "sowing and reaping on personal inadequacies" in *Human All Too Human* is given more elevated expression in *Daybreak*. There, Nietzsche gives greater voice to the specific character of Rousseau's suffering, repeatedly calling attention to his physical illness, sometimes with a great deal of sympathy. In §459, entitled "The magnanimity of the thinker," Nietzsche calls our attention to Rousseau and Schopenhauer's shared motto, *vitam impendere vero* (to consecrate one's life to the truth), and laments that neither of them was able adequately "to consecrate [his] truth to life." By this, Nietzsche seems to mean that neither Rousseau nor Schopenhauer was able to make the truth serve life, nor to harmonize their lives with their philosophizing: "their life ran along beside their knowledge like a wayward bass which refuses to harmonise with the melody!" But then Nietzsche goes on, indicating that this may not be such a grave matter after all, since it is far from unusual: "knowledge would be in a bad way if it were apportioned to every thinker only as it happened to fit his person! And things would be in a bad way with thinkers if their vanity were so great they could endure only this!" Though both Rousseau and Schopenhauer were proud in their choice of motto, neither was so vain as to insist on perfect consistency between his life and works. Nietzsche concludes the aphorism with the claim that, "The fairest virtue of the great thinker is the magnanimity with which, as a man of knowledge, he intrepidly, often with embarrassment, often with sublime mockery and smiling – offers himself and his life as a sacrifice." Nietzsche's basic thought here seems to be that Rousseau and Schopenhauer made sacrifices for the sake of knowledge and work. But his emphasis on embarrassment, lack of vanity, intrepidity, and "sublime mockery and smiling," is odd.

Insofar as it involves these things, Nietzsche's meaning here seems to be that "offering oneself and one's life" as a sacrifice to one's knowledge in fact means sacrificing one's *persona* on behalf of truth – in other words, lying about one's self for the sake of knowledge.

At this point it is worth digressing for a moment to look at aphorism 91 of the *Gay Science,* where Nietzsche openly suggests that one should proceed with caution when reading Rousseau's autobiography, because it might be full of lies. He does so by way of a discussion of the autobiographical writings of Alfieri, an early Italian dramatist. Consider what he says:

> *Caution*. – As is well known, Alfieri told a great many lies when he told his surprised contemporaries the story of his life. What prompted these lies was the same despotic attitude toward himself that he also manifested in the way in which he created his own language and tyrannically forced himself to become a poet: he had finally found a severe form of sublimity into which he then pressed his life and his memory. No doubt, there was much agony in all of this. – I also would not believe a biography of Plato, written by himself – anymore than Rousseau's or the *Vita Nuova* of Dante. (GS §91)

This description of Alfieri's approach coincides beautifully with the account of Rousseau and Schopenhauer's "self-sacrifice" in *Daybreak*, but offers slightly more substance. Here, Nietzsche explains that the sacrifice of the true self-portrait is related to a "despotic attitude" towards oneself, that, furthermore, serves a "severe form of sublimity." This sublime experience in turn shapes the author's account of his life and memory, which are treated as mere matter made to fit the "form" of the sublime dimension of life. In keeping with his language of sacrifice in *Daybreak,* Nietzsche suggests that all of this lying involves considerable agony.

The theme of suffering unto truth gets taken up again later in *Daybreak*, here too in a discussion of Rousseau and Schopenhauer. The aphorism is called "Moral insanity of the genius" (§538). The basic argument of the passage is that the cause of the

eccentricities in the lives of geniuses like Rousseau and Schopenhauer is not moral but physiological. Again, Nietzsche refers to the disproportion that seems to exist between their "great spirits" and the constitutional strength of their person. His claim is that because such men are by nature hyper-intellectual, physical distress tends to manifest itself in moral and mental forms. Nietzsche highlights "that incomprehensible anxiety, vanity, odiousness, enviousness and tightlacedness which suddenly leaps out of them, all that is excessively personal and unfree" in natures such as theirs – all as symptoms of "*defectiveness of the machine.*"[72] Here, then, Nietzsche deflects blame away from Rousseau and Schopenhauer for their particular excesses and distress. What is more remarkable, however, is that Nietzsche changes to the first person plural halfway through the aphorism, thus intimating a great deal of personal kinship with the kind of experiences he has just described. Now he describes the phenomenon from the inside, and again the emphasis is on the discontinuity between the splendid occasions where the intellectual "genius" is felt within ("so long as genius dwells within us, we are courageous, as if mad, indeed, and are heedless of life, health and honour; we fly through the day freer than an eagle and in the dark we are more certain than the owl"), and those times when it departs and leaves the genius stunned and bewildered like a child ("we no longer understand ourselves, we suffer from all we experience, from all we do not experience, we are as though among naked rocks in the face of a storm, and at the same time like pitiable childish souls afraid of rustling and a shadow").

[72] There is some ambiguity in the aphorism, I think, concerning the ultimate direction of causality between the mind and the body. While the suggestion is that the defectiveness of the body is the cause of mental and social problems, Nietzsche leaves the question open (using a dash, which often indicates a puzzle). This question is taken up again in §500, where the suggestion is that certain kinds of mental activities sometimes result in physiological troubles. In any case, Nietzsche is cryptically calling our attention to the complex causal relationships at work in our physiology. See also §462 and 539.

In subsequent aphorisms of Part V of *Daybreak*, the extent of Nietzsche's sympathies with Rousseau are clarified further. We have already seen how Nietzsche sometimes uses comparisons between thinkers to illuminate their characteristics. Over the course of various aphorisms in Part V, Nietzsche continues to take the relative measure of various thinkers, and in reading these passages we can better decipher what he thinks of Rousseau.

One insight that we gain from these aphorisms is that Nietzsche regards Rousseau as superior to Schopenhauer in terms of character. This most clearly emerges in the course of two aphorisms that once more take up the question of the personal character of philosophizing. We have just seen how Nietzsche identifies this as a feature of Rousseau's and Schopenhauer's works, and that he sympathizes with them to a degree. He refines his position further in aphorism 481, where he shows an appreciation for a certain kind of deep personal engagement in a work, now by way of a negative assessment of the "Two Germans" Kant and Schopenhauer. These two are judged alongside Plato, Spinoza, Pascal, Rousseau, and Goethe, and they are deemed insufficient as philosophers because "their thoughts do not constitute a passionate history of the soul." In Kant's case, Nietzsche proceeds, the writings constitute the biography of a head, and in Schopenhauer's, they constitute the mirroring of an 'unalterable' character that lacks a history, and which Nietzsche ultimately finds distasteful (here there is an echo of *Schopenhauer as Educator,* 3, 146). While Kant appears honest and honorable, he lacks breadth, and thus fails to exemplify the kind of life that "possesses leisure and burns with the passion of thinking." Schopenhauer at least has passion – he "possesses a certain *vehement ugliness* in hatred, desire, vanity, mistrust" – but both his character and his ideas lack development, or 'history.' Presumably, then, this is not the case with the other five, including Rousseau.

In aphorism 497, entitled "*The Purifying Eye,"* Nietzsche once more takes up the question of temperament. He compares those "like Schopenhauer," who are unable to detach themselves from their personal circumstances, to others, like Plato, Spinoza, and Goethe, who have "the purifying eye." For the latter group, "the spirit seems to be only *loosely attached* to the character and temperament, as a winged being who can easily detach itself from these and then raise itself high above them." The "purifying eye," then, is that capacity of a thinker to sustain a relatively disinterested, theoretical perspective removed from the concerns of ordinary life; the purifying eye "looks down on the world as on a god and loves this god." Here Rousseau goes unmentioned, but Nietzsche does grant that men "like Schopenhauer" have a kind of greatness because again and again they rediscover themselves, and that they are able to endow their temperament with "the most spiritual, expansive, universal" expression. Since we know that Nietzsche regards Rousseau as similar to Schopenhauer in some ways, and to Plato, Spinoza, and Goethe in others, we are left wondering in this aphorism whether or not Nietzsche thinks he has the "Purifying Eye." This puzzle is not easily resolvable, but Nietzsche does offer us some clues. First, he concludes §497 by explaining that, while "the purifying eye" in Plato, Spinoza, and Goethe *seems* "not to have grown out of their temperament and character," it actually did, for such seeing requires development and practice – the one thing which Nietzsche ascribes to Rousseau and not to Schopenhauer in aphorism 481. The essential difference could be this: while Schopenhauer felt that he had the genius of the "purifying eye" but did not, Rousseau had such genius and hid it from view. Rousseau's "purifying eye" differs from those of Plato, Spinoza, and Goethe, then, mostly in that he makes a pretense of being consumed by his character and temperament – or "self." While Plato, Spinoza, and Goethe tended to conceal their personal histories and flaunt their "purifying eyes," Rousseau exhibits the former and conceals the latter.

Having left Rousseau conspicuously out of the discussion of the purifying eye, Nietzsche turns to him in the aphorisms that follow – and, what is more, provides the beginnings of an account of Rousseau's habits of concealment. Aphorism 498 has a distinctly Rousseauian flavor, insofar as it concerns philosophers' goodwill towards men and how it relates to the need for solitude, though Rousseau again goes unmentioned.[73] Rousseau is the explicit subject of §499, entitled the "The evil man." Rousseau, Nietzsche claims, is the paradigmatic evil man. His evilness derives, Nietzsche argues, from the deep need for solitude, which itself is born of the need to escape the manifold layers of dissimulation and restraint demanded by social life. Nietzsche explains such philosophic wickedness more fully in §496, "The evil principle," where he defers to Plato. The essential point is that the philosophic thinker is everywhere thought to be evil because, "as the critic of all customs he is the antithesis of the moral man." Unless such a man succeeds in becoming a lawgiver, he will always be considered evil – or, in Plato's case, fantastical and idealistic. In the aphorism on Rousseau, it is clear that Nietzsche has immense respect for such a man:

> It is, indeed, a fact that, in the midst of society and sociability every evil inclination has to place itself under such great restraint, don so many masks, lay itself so often on the Procrustean bed of virtue, that one could well speak of a martyrdom of the evil man. In solitude all this falls away. He who is evil is at his most evil in solitude: which is where he is also at his best – and thus to the eye of him who sees everywhere only a spectacle also at his most beautiful. (§499)

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[73] The aphorism provides an unmistakable echo of Rousseau's "Sixth Walk," in which Rousseau discusses his complicated relationship to duty. Consider the following line from Rousseau: "I saw that to do good with pleasure, it was necessary for me to act freely, without constraint, and that to take all the pleasure of a good act away from me, it was sufficient for it to become a duty for me"; compare with Nietzsche's §498:

> *No demands!* – You do not know him! Yes, he does *submit* to men and things, freely and easily, and is well disposed to both; all he asks is to be left in peace – but only *as long as* men and things do not *demand* submission. When anything is demanded of him he becomes proud, retiring and warlike.

This rich passage shows that Nietzsche clearly perceived the sources of Rousseau's rejection of society, understood the extent of his personal concealment, and had a sense of the pains inflicted on Rousseau by society. Nietzsche also shows an appreciation for the sublimity of Rousseau's "evilness," though he leaves it ambiguous whether Rousseau himself experiences the "purifying eye" of "him who sees everywhere only a spectacle," or whether he just provides a beautiful spectacle for those who do.[74]

Over the course of the aphorisms that follow §499, any doubts about whether or Nietzsche had the very deepest respect for Rousseau quietly dissolve. This is because, to anyone familiar with Rousseau's autobiographical works, it gradually becomes clear that this series of aphorisms is, in fact, a tribute to Rousseau (though Rousseau remains unmentioned again until §538). §500 is called "Against the grain," and discusses the industriousness of a Kant (see also §481 and 458), as opposed to one like Rousseau who pursues "the thoughts which offer themselves from within him." §501 discusses the scientific benefits to be gleaned from the abandonment of the belief in the immortality of the soul, but in such a way that it accounts for the historical need for the kind of dissembling engaged in by someone like Rousseau. Aphorism 502, entitled "One word for three different conditions" explains the three ways in which we might understand Rousseauian "passion." Nietzsche notes that it is the wild display of *pathos* that makes such a man appear divine to others, for it fills the witness with delight and terror (while those who have the purifying spectator's eye of §499 might better appreciate "the quiet beauty that he usually represents"?).[75] §503 offers an evaluation of the pitfalls of the

[74] In a prior aphorism, Nietzsche concisely accounts for the psychological resistance that readers might have to the idea of a lying Rousseau. While the "evil man" is always a problem, our attachment to morality is so deep that it is absolutely *forbidden* to appreciate the evil man's wild beauty when that same evil man "poses as good and law-abiding" (§468). Many such beauties, Nietzsche declares, have yet to be discovered.

[75] If I am correct and Nietzsche is talking about Rousseau here, the suggestion seems to be that Rousseau engages in violent, "wild" histrionics in part in order to appeal to the audience, for men "understand him

modern emphasis on sexual love as it tends to affect men like Rousseau. §504 offers an implicit congratulation to men like Rousseau who wait for their ideas to ripen before they begin to write. §505 describes the power of thinkers to "determine the *palatableness* of things," especially practical things – something which Rousseau succeeded at so particularly well.

§506 is called "The necessary drying out of everything good" and provides a commentary on why it is sometimes necessary not to read a book in "the damp air of its own age." Sometimes, Nietzsche claims, we are in a better position to understand a work long after its publication, for in its own time "there still adheres to it all too much of the odour of the marketplace and its opponents and of the latest opinions and everything that changes form today to tomorrow." He explains: "Later on it dries out, its 'timeboundness' expires – and only then does it acquire its deep luster and pleasant odour and, if that is what it is seeking, its quiet eye of eternity." This description seems especially apt for Rousseau's *Confessions,* which, as a theoretical work, so often seems to be weighed down and inhibited by Rousseau's preoccupation with the personalities and rumors around him. Indeed, §506 provides a good antidote to scholars' entrenched misunderstanding of that work. §507 is called "Against the tyranny of the true" and discusses the delights of falsification, as well as the need to preserve opposing opinions. §508 is called "Not with *pathos,*" and describes a peculiar kind of reticence pertaining to things that are personally beneficial and pleasant (calling to mind Rousseau's "Fourth Walk," and his reticence about his own happiness and virtue). §509, "The Third Eye" perfectly encapsulates the deeper meaning behind a Rousseauian turn away from the theatre: "one must turn away from the theatre to look upon the world, where things are

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more when he is in passion, and revere him more, precisely on account of these moments – they bring him a step closer and make him more akin to them." Here Nietzsche praises the wild passion for its profundity, and as a rhetorical device, but nonetheless seems to hold the quiet beauty to be supreme.

more interesting and interested!" He continues as follows: "And then, in almost every situation you find hard and painful you will have a little portal to joy and a refuge even when your own passions assail you. Open your theatre-eye, the great third eye which looks out into the world through the other two!" Here Nietzsche comes close to articulating a distinctly Rousseauian version of the "Purifying Eye," and beautifully describes some of the deepest lessons to be gleaned from the *Confessions.*

The Middle Period Take 3: Clandestine Monuments to Rousseau

As is probably evident by now, I think that in *Daybreak* Nietzsche does more than simply acknowledge Rousseau's genius. As we explore the aphorisms of Part V *Daybreak* that surround Nietzsche's explicit discussion of Rousseau in §499, in the hopes of gaining insight into some of Nietzsche's more cryptic suggestions there, Nietzsche's appreciation of, and indebtedness to, Rousseau's autobiographical thought becomes apparent. I would go so far as to suggest that the whole of Part V comes to light as a thoughtful commentary on Rousseau's autobiographical works. While I cannot demonstrate that this was Nietzsche's intention without a discussion of the full sequence of aphorisms, some headway can be made in this direction in the space we have here.

First (but probably least persuasively), although Rousseau is mentioned only five times in Part V of *Daybreak*, he is the main subject of the central aphorism (§499, "The Evil Man"). Second, Nietzsche peppers Part V with language that evokes scenery from the *Confessions*, referring to Venice, hermitages and islands, plants, reverie, youthful misadventures and pursuits, the pleasures of recollecting youth, walking through mountains, and embarking on journeys (see, for example, §424, 427, 452, 454, 458, 468, 469, 476, 482, 492, 530, 531, 553, and 575). Third, the themes that recur again and again

in Part V are consistently Rousseauian, and include nature (§423, 426, 427, 428, 434, 455, 464, 468, 486, 513, 540), solitude (§423, 432, 435, 441, 443, 466, 469, 473, 478, 485, 488, 491, 510, 524, 531, 566, 569), the philosopher's need for deception and self-mockery (§423, 432, 437, 438, 441, 449, 464, 466, 472, 511, 512, 522, 523, 524, 526, 527, 532, 533, 550), the passions and suffering for truth (§425, 429, 440, 451, 457, 462, 467, 469, 474, 475, 476, 478, 479, 480, 518, 543), imagination (§426, 427, 428), and happiness (§424, 433, 439, 440, 450, 492, 550, 561, 566, 572).

Finally, even without delving into a full-fledged interpretation of *Daybreak,* in studying Part V we can see how it could be read as the story of Nietzsche's encounter with Rousseau. Nietzsche begins Part V with an aphorism, I suggest, that offers an allegorical tribute to Rousseau, and introduces the question of Rousseau's reticence with regards to his 'real' self. Over the course of subsequent aphorisms, Nietzsche describes his experiences reading Rousseau, provides alternative psychological accounts of Rousseau's most enigmatic behavior, accounts for his own reticence to name Rousseau throughout, and, finally, accounts for his own philosophic departure from Rousseau. A consideration of a few more aphorisms can help us to see how this takes shape.

Nietzsche begins with an enigmatic aphorism called "In the Great Silence" that reads, at first blush, like an apostrophe to silent nature (§423). From the start, the passage calls to mind Rousseau – the first line is "Here is the sea, here we can forget the city" – though it goes on to describe nature's mute evening splendor. With the knowledge that for Nietzsche Rousseau is "The Evil Man," however, the allusion to Rousseau gradually becomes more defined:

> "Oh the hypocrisy of this silent beauty! How well it could speak, and how evilly too, if it wished! Its tied tongue and its expression of sorrowing happiness is a deception: it wants to mock at your sympathy! – So be it! I am not ashamed of being mocked by such powers."

With the references to hypocrisy, silence, stymied speech, and the deception of sorrowing happiness, these lines add plausibility to the suggestion that the opening apostrophe to nature is actually an apostrophe to human nature as it is manifest in Jean-Jacques. Nietzsche's own subsequent embodiment of "silent nature," towards the end of the passage, lends further credence to my suggestion:

> It is growing more still, my heart swells again: it is startled by a new truth, *it too cannot speak,* it too mocks when the mouth calls something into this beauty, it too enjoys its sweet silent malice. I begin to hate speech, to hate even thinking; for do I not hear behind every word the laughter of error, of imagination, of the spirit of delusion?

Here Nietzsche seems to be in full solidarity with much of Rousseau's thought on the difficulty of expressing the truth about the full richness of experience.[76]

A later aphorism reverses the movement that we see in §423, but in such a way that the solidarity with Rousseau is sustained. While in §423, Nietzsche begins by addressing nature, proceeds elusively to discuss Rousseau, and then transitions to discuss himself, in §449 Nietzsche begins by discussing his own experience, but then proceeds to merge this self-description with the depiction of an elusive third person who sounds a lot like Rousseau. The aphorism is called "*Where are the needy in spirit?*" It begins with a beautiful thought about the joys of good teaching and good learning: "Ah! How reluctant I am to force my own ideas upon another! How I rejoice in any mood and secret transformation within myself which means that the ideas of another have prevailed over my own!" He then proceeds to describe an "even higher festival," which he likens to the experience of a "father confessor," who "sits in his corner anxious for one in need to

[76] He will later make an insightful suggestion that again calls Rousseau to mind: just as painters resort to artifice to depict nature's beauties, "so poets and philosophers too have to resort to a similar expedient when they are unable to reproduce the radiance of real happiness; by painting all things a couple of degrees darker than they are, they can make their lighter touches seem almost sunny, and, by contrast, similar to actual happiness" (§572).

come and tell of the distress of his mind, so that he may again fill his hands and his heart and make light his troubled soul!" To this point, it seems at least plausible that Nietzsche could be describing the experience of reading and understanding the *Confessions*, and thus unburdening Rousseau; but in the rest of the aphorism, there is a blurring, and it becomes unclear whether the subject is the father/reader, or the confessor/author:

> He is not merely not looking for fame: he would even like to escape gratitude, for gratitude is too importunate and lacks respect for solitude and silence. What he seeks is to live nameless and lightly mocked at, too humble to awaken envy or hostility, with a head free of fever, equipped with a handful of knowledge and a bagful of experience […] To be like a little inn which rejects no one who is in need but which is afterwards forgotten or ridiculed! To possess no advantage, neither better food nor purer air nor a more joyful spirit – but to give away, to give back, to communicate, to grow poorer! To be able to be humble, so as to be accessible to many and humiliating to none! To have much injustice done to him, and to have crept through the worm-holes of errors of every kind, so as to be able to reach many hidden souls on their secret paths! For ever in a kind of love and for ever in a kind of selfishness and self-enjoyment! To be in possession of a dominion and at the same time concealed and renouncing! To lie continually in the sunshine and gentleness of grace, and yet to know that the paths that rise up to the sublime are close by! – That would be a life! That would be a reason for a long life!

Without endeavoring fully to interpret this strange but rich aphorism, I will note that the description fits with Nietzsche's explicit references to Rousseau's vast experience and knowledge of "high mountains," even while it begins to account for Rousseau's humble, and egalitarian literary approach. It concludes with the suggestion that such a life would truly be enviable, even for a man like Nietzsche.

Part V of Daybreak is peppered with speculations about the psychological causes underlying a *pathos* like Rousseau's. In §449, we have already encountered the suggestion that there is a kind of humility born of pedagogical generosity, of the desire for solitude and silence over fame, the desire to have broad appeal (see also §502), the desire to humiliate no one, and the desire for solitary pleasure. In other aphorisms, Nietzsche elaborates on some of these suggestions, describing the special kindness of anonymity (§464), the pitfalls of fame (§466), the awkwardness of legitimate self-

justification and pride (speaking on behalf of an anonymous interlocutor, Nietzsche explains an unwillingness to defend oneself as follows "I am too indifferent and lazy with regard to myself and thus with regard to the effect I produce," §472), the futility of self-defense and inevitability of being misunderstood (§475, 480), the need to guard one's innermost joys and torments (§524), and the deceptiveness and moderation of the good-natured who desire to stay hidden (§527). Nietzsche discusses the offensiveness of those superior types who have a broad prospect on humanity and history, thus further justifying the need to dissemble (§441). He suggests that it is part of the master's humanity to display his faults openly (§447), that a truly wise person might employ his faults to conceal his superiority, all the while providing others the opportunity to take revenge on him and thus to vent their own sense of inadequacy (§469). Another type concerned with truth might behave excessively honestly at times – like a court jester – in order for once to be treated with full frankness by others (§451). Some men have to offend their friends and lovers intentionally so that their affections do not unduly interfere with their love of truth (§479, see also §512 and 562), or in order that their friends might not feel ashamed to take their affections elsewhere (§489). All of these are insights to be gleaned in observing Rousseau in his *Confessions*. In "We Beginners," Nietzsche describes the experience of watching a fellow-actor and painter perform, and articulates the contemporary need for "the eye of this actor and painter for the domain of the human souls" (§533). It seems likely that Rousseau was one of Nietzsche's most important teachers (see §495 and 497).

Nietzsche's respect for these Rousseauian lessons is beautifully reflected in his choice not to name Rousseau explicitly as the subject of Part V– but Nietzsche amply accounts for his choice in aphorisms spanning this part of *Daybreak*. On the one hand, we can infer that Nietzsche keeps silent about his benefactor here for all of the reasons

Rousseau is silent about aspects of himself – as a lover of Rousseau, Nietzsche wants to protect Rousseau's own act. On the other hand, Nietzsche openly acknowledges as much with statements like the following:

> *Ultimate silence.* – Some act like treasure-seekers: they light by accident upon things which the soul of another has kept hidden and acquire a knowledge of it which is often hard to bear! There are circumstances under which one can know and understand the living and the dead to such a degree that it is painful to speak about them to others: one is constantly afraid of being indiscreet. – I can imagine the wisest historian suddenly falling silent. (§457)

Consider also the following: "To the solitary. – If we are not as considerate of the honor of other people in our private soliloquies as we are in public, we are not behaving decently" (§569). Finally, we have the heartrending §478: "*Let us pass by*! – Spare him! Leave him in his solitude! Do you want to break him completely to pieces? He has sprung a leak, like a glass into which something too hot has suddenly been poured – and he was such a precious glass!"

Nietzsche leaves the subject of Part V hidden, then, as a way of symbolizing and communicating his respect for his Rousseau's private depths. Though Nietzsche recognizes the real Rousseau, he chooses to keep up Rousseau's surfaces – with the understanding, I might add, that Rousseau himself would not too much care either way (Nietzsche repeatedly alludes to the philosopher's lack of petty self-concern, see §492, 494, 547, 553, and 575). Nietzsche never does openly present a defense of Rousseau; instead, in the final period, he affects a radical departure from Rousseau. In the later aphorisms of Part V of *Daybreak*, however, Nietzsche accounts for his break with Rousseau in a way that highlights certain areas of disagreement without fully undermining his deeper solidarity. He implies, for example, that Rousseau's ultimate influence on philosophy has not been altogether healthy, for it has meant the prizing of vague and pseudo-religious "intuition" over reason (§544), it promotes a kind of moral

dilettantism that fails to be grounded in actual experience (§545), and Rousseau's laissez-faire embrace of nature fosters a prejudice against genuine cultivation and education (§560). Nietzsche further seems to suggest that there is something distasteful about hiding one's virtues (§558), that if one works too hard at acting one's part, inevitably one presents a distortion to the world, which leaves one's audience with a sense of failure (§559), and that it is important to "let your happiness too shine out" (§561). And yet for all these disagreements, Nietzsche defends his own choice to counter Rousseau's outlook with the suggestion that being surpassed is the fate of every great spirit, since endless deserts stretch out in front of even the best. Consider the following:

> All our great teachers and predecessors have at last come to a stop and it is not with the noblest or most graceful of gestures that weariness comes to a stop: it will be the same with you and me! But what does that matter to you and me! *Other birds will fly father!* (§575, see also 554 and 564)

Another aphorism that comes late in *Daybreak* explains Nietzsche's movement beyond Rousseau as follows:

> *Poet and bird.* – The phoenix showed the poet a scroll which was burning to ashes. 'Do not be dismayed!' it said, 'it is your work! It does not have the spirit of the age and even less the spirit of those who are against the age: consequently it must be burned. But this is a good sign. There are many kinds of daybreaks.' (§568)

Nietzsche's eventual treatment of Rousseau's works is explained in terms that recollect Nietzsche's account of Rousseau's evilness. The time has come where Rousseau's works no longer challenge the spirit of the age, and Nietzsche trusts that Rousseau would rejoice at his own "going on ahead."

III. The Final Period: Nietzsche's "Sacrifice"

In the middle period, Nietzsche deepens criticisms of Rousseau that were already there in the early period, but he also displays a deep familiarity with Rousseau – and a special

regard, in particular, for the personal, inward-looking character of Rousseau's thought. In the final period of Nietzsche's writings, which proceed from *Zarathustra* to *Nietzsche Contra Wagner*, Nietzsche all but jettisons any sign of respect for Rousseau. In fact, his treatment of Rousseau takes on a rhetorical sharpness that exceeds by far even the most critical comments of the earlier periods. This is in keeping with the general tenor of the final period, in which Nietzsche's writings become generally far bolder and more rhetorically diverse and extravagant; these later works are also among Nietzsche's most popular and widely read. It is from these works primarily that readers have come to understand Nietzsche as an enemy of all things Rousseauian.[77] Looking at Nietzsche's comments on Rousseau from the final period therefore provides us with a good example of just how important rhetoric becomes to him, and just how distortive the rhetoric of the final works can be.

Probably the most vivid depiction of Rousseau in Nietzsche's final period occurs in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. There, in the chapter entitled "Of the Tarantulas" he takes up the image of the "moral tarantula" that was first introduced in the preface of *Daybreak*. Nietzsche takes up a number of themes in "Of the Tarantulas" that we have seen already in his statements on Rousseau, but he focuses in particular on the "secret vengefulness" that motivates the tarantulas, their poisonous doctrine of equality, and the revolutionary character of their message (see Merrow 2004, 228-229). Nietzsche denies that the tarantulas are motivated by "the heart," suggesting instead that they seek revenge, and

[77] Merrow rightly recognizes the rhetorical tenor of Nietzsche's treatment of Rousseau, but does not acknowledge the more nuanced treatment of the middle period. Her evaluation is nonetheless helpful and has informed my discussion here. According to Merrow, Nietzsche appropriates the name of Rousseau for his own purposes, and attaches to it " a set of significations… such that the name marks the point in Nietzsche's genealogy at which the history of the modern liberal state and the history of European nihilism as the consequence of Platonism and Christianity come together" (234). This seems right to me, as does Merrow's suggestion that, largely because of Rousseau's status as a *political* thinker "no one else could occupy this position in Nietzsche's texts" (237).

will take all kinds of deceptive paths to attain it, including philosophical ones ("Their jealousy leads them upon thinkers' paths too"). They love to clothe themselves in the language of justice, and they find their real bliss in judgment and punishment. The tarantulas preach lies and revenge against everything that has power, and call it their justice; secretly they yearn after the power of tyrants. They speak out from "tyrant-madness of impotence" and "secret tyrant-appetites"; "soured self-conceit, [and] repressed envy… burst from [them] as a flame and madness of revenge" (123). The special poison of the tarantula is the doctrine of equality, which is a dangerous and powerful idea that leads to revolutions. The tarantulas cry out: "that the world may become full of the storms of our revenge, let precisely that be called justice by us… And "will to equality"—that itself shall henceforth be the name of virtue; and we shall raise outcry against everything that has power!" (123). Zarathustra replies memorably: "Justice speaks thus *to me*: 'Men are not equal.' And they should not become so, either!" (124).

Zarathustra's message about the danger of the doctrine of equality resonates throughout Nietzsche's late works. Consider this line from *Twilight of the Idols*:

> The doctrine of equality! There is no more poisonous poison anywhere: for it seems to be preached by justice itself, whereas really it is the termination of justice. "Equal to the equal, unequal to the unequal"—that would be the true slogan of justice; and also its corollary: "Never make equal what is unequal." (*Twilight, Skirmishes* §48)

In Nietzsche's understanding, the real danger of the doctrine of equality lies precisely in its false understanding of justice. The preachers of equality are, in Nietzschean terms, the modern proponents of slave morality, and although the teaching is full of revengefulness and lies, it is a seductive teaching that has broad appeal, and thus lends itself to moral fanaticism and revolutionary zeal. From as early on as *Schopenhauer as Educator,* Nietzsche associates Rousseau with revolutionary fanaticism, but in the later works he explains more fully how Rousseauian doctrines gained power. His emphasis is always on

the falseness of these doctrines, and how they accrue power precisely because of their falseness (here, then, he carries through on the idea expressed in the preface to *Daybreak* that Rousseau propagated the most problematic cultural institutions, and that his having done so is related to misbegotten optimism). Consider the following discussion of fanaticism from the *Antichrist*:

> The believer is not free to have a conscience at all over the question 'true' and 'false': to be honest on this point would mean his immediate destruction. The pathological conditionality of his perspective makes of the convinced man a fanatic—Savanarola, Luther, Rousseau, Robespierre, Saint-Simon—the antithetical type of the strong, emancipated spirit. But the larger-than-life attitudes of these sick spirits, these conceptual epileptics, impresses the great masses—fanatics are picturesque, mankind would rather see gestures than listen to reasons… (§54)[78]

Here Rousseau is explicitly charged with the propagation of the kinds of sentiments and lies that contribute to modern fanaticism and immoderation. As Nietzsche further explains in *Twilight of the Idols,* such fanaticism has a way of legitimating itself through spectacles of violence. Nietzsche there explains how he hates the Revolution mostly because it seemed to legitimate "Rousseauian *morality,*" because it gave it a "kind of glory and fiery aura" the sheer excess of which persuaded "even the noblest spirits" (*Twilight*, §48). Nietzsche hates the false doctrine – the poisonous doctrine of equality – more than the violence it promoted, except to the extent that the fanatical violence stupefied so many into acceptance of the unjust doctrine.

This, then, is the general thrust of Nietzsche's late critique of Rousseau. As he attacks Rousseau primarily for his revenge instincts, his doctrine of equality, and his revolutionary zeal, the message is overwhelmingly aggressive.[79] Even in passages where

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[78] See also the Preface to *Daybreak,* where Nietzsche calls Robespierre a disciple of Rousseau—one who felt and proclaimed himself to be the executor of a moral fanaticism that seeks to "found the empire of wisdom, justice, and virtue on earth" (section 3).

[79] Ansell-Pearson helpfully summarizes the most obvious over-simplifications of Nietzsche's caricature as follows: Nietzsche too readily associates Rousseau with the French Revolution, he simplifies Rousseauian

Nietzsche returns to Rousseauian themes that clearly enchanted him at earlier stages, in the final works he almost always stands against Rousseau.[80] The same is true of "On the Tarantulas," but there Nietzsche does, towards the end of the chapter, obliquely acknowledge his debt to Rousseau and account for the turn against him. Zarathustra closes the chapter with an acknowledgement of the beautiful ruins that exist on the site of the tarantula's cave. The description is a fitting one for the works of Rousseau:

> Truly, he who once towered up his thoughts in stone here knew as well as the wisest about the secret of all life! That there is battle and inequality and war for power and predominance even in beauty: he teaches us here in the clearest parable. How divinely vault and arch here oppose one another in the struggle: how they strive against one another with light and shadow, these divinely-striving things.

But along with the acknowledgement of the beauty of the bygone edifices of the tarantula's domain, there comes a declaration of rivalry: "Beautiful and assured as these, let us also be enemies, my friends! Let us divinely strive *against* one another!" Here, in keeping with his subtle treatment of Rousseau in *Daybreak,* Nietzsche quietly admits that his "sacrifice" of Rousseau is best understood as something like an invitation to a duel.[81]

Romanticism, he altogether neglects Rousseau's critique of Christianity, and overstates the natural goodness of Rousseauian man (1991, 49-52).

[80] Another extreme example worth mentioning occurs in *Twilight "*Skirmishes," 48:

> *Progress in my sense.* — I too speak of a 'return to nature,' although it is really not a going back but a going up—an ascent to the high, free, even terrible nature and naturalness where great tasks are something one plays with, one may play with. To put it metaphorically: Napoleon was a piece of 'return to nature,' as I understand the phrase. […] But Rousseau—to what did he really want to return? Rousseau, this first modern man, idealist and rabble in one person—one who needed moral 'dignity' to be able to stand his own sight, sick with unbridled vanity and unbridled self-contempt. This miscarriage, couched on the threshold of modern times, also wanted a 'return to nature'; to ask this once more, to what did Rousseau want to return?

[81] Somewhat comically, the tarantula Rousseau, who is annoyed with Zarathustra for praising strife, replies by biting him, "with godlike assurance and beauty." Zarathustra in turn admits that he feels the lust for revenge, but, Nietzsche says, "he will never dance the tarantella." It seems possible to me that with this reference to the tarantella Nietzsche explains the choice of the tarantula as his image for Rousseau. In a memorable chapter of *The Essay on the Origin of Languages* entitled "That our liveliest sensations often act through moral impressions" Rousseau engages in a discussion of the myth concerning the Tarantella dance as a cure for tarantula bites as evidence in favor of the primacy of moral and intellectual impressions over mere sensory perception:

> The cure of Tarantula bites is cited as a proof of the physical power of sounds. This example proves entirely the contrary. What is required to heal everyone who has been bitten by this insect

In *Ecce Homo* – which is Nietzsche's unconventional autobiography, and to which we will be turning in the next chapter – Nietzsche makes the duel-like treatment of his adversaries explicit. *Ecce Homo* was one of the final works Nietzsche ever wrote, and it has a retrospective quality typical to autobiography; what he says there helps to further explain how his adversarial treatment of Rousseau in the later works is consistent with the respect shown him elsewhere. Nietzsche explains his general tactics in some detail in a chapter entitled *Why I am so Wise,*" where he makes plain that he has a practice of only critiquing those things and people whom he admires, and that as such his critiques are actually a form of high compliment. He begins by distinguishing his kind of attack from one born of vengefulness:

> *To be able* to be an enemy, to be an enemy – that perhaps presupposes a strong nature, it is in any event a condition of every strong nature. It needs resistances, consequently it *seeks* resistances… The undertaking is to master, *not* any resistances that happen to present themselves, but those against which one has to bring all one's strength, suppleness and mastery of weapons – to master *equal* opponents… Equality in the face of the enemy – first presupposition of an *honest* duel. Where one despises one *cannot* wage war; where one commands, where one sees something as beneath one, one *has* not to wage war. (EH I, 7)

Though Nietzsche sometimes accuses Rousseau of being motivated by vengefulness, here we see that the very vigor of his attack on Rousseau paradoxically indicates that he believes Rousseau to be fundamentally strong. This is made even more clear when

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> is neither absolute sounds nor the same tunes: each of them needs tunes of a melody familiar to him and lyrics he understands. Italian tunes are needed for Italian, for the Turk, Turkish tunes would be needed. Each is affected only by accents that are familiar to him; his nerves yield to them only insofar as his mind disposes them to him: he must understand the language that is spoken to him for what is said to him to be able to move him. Bernier's cantatas have, it is said, cured the fever of a French musician; they would have given one to a musician of any other nation. The same differences can be observed in all the other senses… (324)

This passage of Rousseau's prefigures certain insights of Nietzsche's in substantive ways. In particular, the passage points to the need for a historically-appropriate rhetoric, in addition to a music that is historically tuned to cure tarantula bites. When Zarathustra says he refuses to dance the tarantella, then, it is the equivalent of saying that he refuses to speak in conformity with contemporary *mores* and norms. He, then, is the latest incarnation of the "evil man" whom Nietzsche describes in *Daybreak*. As I will argue in the next chapter, however, Nietzsche himself proves quite willing to dance a certain version of the proverbial tarantella.

Nietzsche goes on to list his four "rules of engagement": 1) He only attacks victorious causes, and 2) causes against which he is the sole adversary; 3) He never attacks persons: "I merely avail myself of the person as of a strong magnifying glass that allows one to make visible a general but creeping and elusive calamity"; 4) He only attacks when there is no personal history of bad experience. Nietzsche concludes the section with the following noteworthy statement: "Attack is in my case a proof of good will, and sometimes of gratitude. I honor, I distinguish by associating my name with that of a cause or a person: pro or con – that makes no difference to me at this point." Nietzsche explicitly acknowledges (in rule 3) that his attacks are often hyperbolic and rhetorical, and that he uses others as symbols for elusive malicious tendencies. His extravagant accusations of Rousseau, complete as they are with imagery and slogans, fall in this category: he chooses Rousseau to represent modern phenomena that he comes to find increasingly problematic, such as romanticism, egalitarianism, and moral fanaticism. And while this choice is anything but arbitrary – it signals Nietzsche's legitimate belief that Rousseau, and especially Rousseau the rhetorician, was a key source of many troubling modern phenomena – it is also not devoid of gratitude towards Rousseau, nor is it inconsistent with the suggestion that Nietzsche and Rousseau shared a good deal in common in terms of their highest experience as philosophers, and their deepest motives. As we saw in the discussion of Part V of *Daybreak,* Nietzsche seems to agree with Rousseau about the character of the philosophic life. Nietzsche also seems to hold that Rousseau's thought has grown stale, even harmful; and as we have just seen, Nietzsche's harsh treatment of Rousseau in the final period could be viewed as a further sign of Nietzsche's deeper solidarity.

We have seen how Nietzsche treats Rousseau throughout the various periods of his literary life. One famous passage from the middle period helps us to understand Nietzsche's ultimate vantage point:

> *The journey to Hades*.— I, too, have been in the underworld, like Odysseus, and shall be there often yet; and not only rams have I sacrificed to be able to speak with a few of the dead, but I have not spared my own blood. Four pairs it was that did not deny themselves to my sacrifice: Epicurus and Montaigne, Goethe and Spinoza, Plato and Rousseau, Pascal and Schopenhauer. With these I must come to terms when I have long wandered alone; they may call me right and wrong; to them will I listen when in the process they call each other right and wrong. Whatsoever I say, resolve, or think up for myself and others – on these eight I fix my eyes and see their eyes fixed on me.
> May the living forgive me that occasionally *they* appear to me as shades, so pale and somber, so restless and, alas, so lusting for life – while these men then seem so alive to me as if now, *after* death, they could never again grow weary of life. But *eternal aliveness* is what counts: what matters "eternal life" or any life! (408; see also *Daybreak,* 562)

Scholars have wondered about Rousseau's appearance on Nietzsche's list of great philosopher-judges in Hades, for it seems so incongruous with his treatment of him elsewhere (see, for example, Brobjer 2009, 25-26). Having considered now the full array of Nietzsche's thoughts on Rousseau, the inclusion of Rousseau among these other exemplars is no longer so surprising.[82] Like many moderns, Nietzsche too is guilty of caricaturing Rousseau, but he does so in a self-consciously rhetorical way that pays tributes of irony to Rousseau's own rhetorical extremes. Nietzsche also candidly admits that real disagreements exist between himself and these others, but even so, they are the ones he entrusts as his ultimate judges – and, he further claims, they approached him willingly.

Having considered how Nietzsche treated Rousseau throughout his *oeuvre*, we turn in the next chapter to consider how he deals with himself in his autobiography. Nietzsche's willingness to dissemble and falsify has, in some ways, already proven as

[82] The "four pairs" constitute a series that seems to reflect the relative (apparent?) enjoyment experienced by each man in their philosophizing, in ascending order.

robust as Rousseau's. Now we will see what this means with respect to Nietzschean self-disclosure, and Nietzschean self-sacrifice.

Chapter 4: The Honesty of *Ecce Homo*

In the previous chapter, we explored Nietzsche's changing evaluation and presentation of Rousseau. We saw how Nietzsche's early interest in Rousseau revolved around the question of nature's benevolence, and the political implications of the belief in "good" nature. In the middle period, Nietzsche acknowledges that Rousseauian "goodness" may not be quite what it seems – he even attributes untimely "evilness" to Rousseau, which suggests that Rousseau could be one of Nietzsche's own evil teachers, even if Nietzsche ultimately denounces his master. Keeping Rousseau in mind, in this chapter we turn to Nietzsche's own self-presentation in *Ecce Homo*. If Rousseau's self-presentation involves a considerable amount of dissembling and, as I have suggested, Nietzsche recognized the complex motives driving Rousseau, how might this be reflected in his own autobiographical endeavor?

Until quite recently, *Ecce Homo* has been a marginalized text in Nietzsche scholarship. This is due in part to its complicated publication history (it was not published until twenty years after Nietzsche's death, and then in a form altered by Elizabeth Förster-Nietzsche), but the more essential cause of the work's neglect is its outrageous and provocative character.[83] Before getting to this, however, we might note the ostensible motives of the autobiography, which, as they are expressed early in the work, seem more or less conventional: like many a writer before him, Nietzsche finds

[83] See Duncan Large's "Double 'Whaam'!" (1995, 442-449) and the introduction to his 2007 translation (xxviii), for helpful overviews of the publication history of *Ecce Homo,* and of the work's critical reception. As Large explains, *Ecce Homo* was systematically marginalized until very recently – it remained unpublished longer than any other finished work, was not always included in major editions of Nietzsche's complete works until the 1970s; the general reception of the work by Nietzsche scholars mirrors this troubled history.

himself terribly misunderstood, and, out of concern for authorial reputation, he sets out to set the record straight (Foreword 1). With the subtitle of the work, *Wie man wird was man ist*¸ or *How one becomes what one is*, Nietzsche further specifies a pedagogical motive behind the work. Finally, in the beautiful epigraph to the work, which begins "on this perfect day," Nietzsche indicates that the book is a spontaneous personal expression of gratitude for his life. The conclusion to the note, "Und so erzähle ich mir mein Leben/And so I tell myself my life," divulges the self-contained meditative character of the work. Nietzsche's motives thus come to light as threefold. He has a broad concern for his authorial reputation, he has a pedagogical interest in the development of the self, and he experiences personal enjoyment in the activity of self-narration.

And yet, despite Nietzsche's ostensible motives, rather than being lucid, educative, or agreeable in any straight-forward way, *Ecce Homo* is especially confusing, cryptic, and rude. A brief comparison with Rousseau's *Confessions* should help elucidate the basic character of *Ecce Homo.* First of all, whereas Rousseau's *Confessions* are undoubtedly an irreverent tribute to St. Augustine, Nietzsche's title invokes the vulgate bible, and implicates himself in the place of Christ himself (more on this below). Though the *Confessions* contains its share of interpretive puzzles, as discussed in Chapter Two, it nonetheless brings to life charming details from the everyday and provides compelling accounts of Rousseau's psychologically formative episodes. Compared to this, *Ecce Homo* is an intellectual vault. While Rousseau proceeds in a roughly linear tell-all fashion through the years and episodes of his life, Nietzsche focuses on his maturity and he does so in an especially enigmatic and riddling way. Where Rousseau says very little about his philosophical writings in the *Confessions*, Nietzsche devotes over half the work to puzzling discussions of his works, suggesting that in order to understand him it is necessary to comprehend each of his perplexing works in the context of his evolving

identity. Finally, while Rousseau takes care to render himself sympathetically in (most of) his autobiographical works, all the better to draw readers in, Nietzsche displays an exuberant, and potentially very offensive, degree of megalomaniacal bravado in his. The overwhelming *pathos* of the work is one of unhinged boastfulness. In Duncan Large's words, "in *Ecce Homo,* Nietzsche's use of hyperbole *itself* becomes hyperbolic" (1995). In this it is at once alienating and humorous.

In addition, then, to manifesting all the perplexities attending the genre of philosophical autobiography, *Ecce Homo* is singularly obfuscating and elusive.[84] Given the difficult and unusual character of the work, it is no wonder that it was neglected for so long, by publishers as well as commentators. Even today, relatively little has been written about *Ecce Homo*. Much as in the case of Rousseau, there is plenty of reason here for initial skepticism regarding the overall coherence of Nietzsche's autobiographical work. Because of its outlandish character, it is a singularly difficult work to take seriously, and up until the last twenty years or so, Nietzsche scholars have often dismissed the work as presaging the mental collapse that would occur soon after the work's completion (in 1888). Such commentators include many who are otherwise sympathetic to Nietzsche's thought, such as Walter Kaufmann, Kathleen Higgins, Daniel Conway, and Julian Young. Despite his obvious appreciation of some aspects of *Ecce Homo*, Young, for example, has the following to say:

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[84] Scholars have long argued about the status of *Ecce Homo* as an autobiography. Hollingdale, for example, declares it a "failure" as an autobiography because of its lack of objectivity (Intro, 7; see also Silverman 137, and Richard Samuel, 1973). This view has roots in Heidegger's influential work on Nietzsche, which, while warning against the suggestion that *Ecce Homo* is the work of a madman, also denies that the work has much relationship to the person 'Herr Nietzsche' (see Heidegger's *Nietzsche,* Volume 3, 1). I am inclined to take for granted that factual truths are not necessarily the point of philosophical autobiography, and use the term rather loosely to indicate a book about the self, which, in my mind, *Ecce Homo* is (for a fascinating and persuasive statement on the ultimate implications of Heidegger's treatment of *Ecce Homo,* see Kofman, *Explosion I*, 37-43).

> A great deal of the hyperbole has a megalomaniac character which […] is directly continuous with themes in the letters he wrote as he was unmistakably losing his mind. […] *Ecce Homo* is, then, a flawed work. Other signs of Nietzsche's failing powers are repetition, wandering organization, self-quotation at disproportionate and self-indulgent length, and, when he comes to review his earlier works, a lack of the sense of their relative importance. (Young 2010, 520)

Others, such as Conway, take *Ecce Homo* to be representative of the growing desperation and *ressentiment* of Nietzsche's final period, and his great nihilistic failure to overcome his own decadence. For him, and those he has influenced, the tenor of *Ecce Homo* is not essentially different from the other late works, but represents the culminating extreme in a sad trajectory. Conway's 2000 essay "Odysseus Bound" nicely captures his attitude towards *Ecce Homo* and the late Nietzsche. The following statement is typical in its emphasis on the merely incidental value of the work:

> He may have flinched from beholding himself in the full, terrifying embodiment of his decadence, but he furnished the symptomatological tools others would need to plumb the murky depths of his lacerated soul. Nietzsche's decadence is thus responsible for the crowning irony of his life and career: It is only as a decadent, as the consummate man of *ressentiment,* that he commands anything like the power and influence he regularly claims for himself. (41)

As is clear in what follows, I disagree with Conway's outlook on the late Nietzsche; Conway does not consider the possibility that Nietzsche maintains control of the 'performative' features of the work, and neglects *Ecce Homo's* core message of affirmation.

A recent strain of scholarship has started to consider *Ecce Homo*, at least potentially, as a work of sanity. Sarah Kofman is the leading commentator in this camp, and the first to publish a full-length commentary on *Ecce Homo* (completed in two French volumes in 1992 and 1993); Duncan Large has contributed to the rehabilitation of *Ecce Homo* both through his endorsement of Kofman's works, and with his new 2007 translation of the book. Both Kofman and Large take *Ecce Homo* seriously as a work of philosophy, and provide many helpful insights into the work. But even they are

somewhat too eager to dismiss the most outrageous claims of the work, and explain away too much of what Nietzsche says in *Ecce Homo* with recourse to arguments about his infinite subjectivity and irony (see, for example, Kofman I, 20 and II, 345). In endeavoring to explain the hyperbole of *Ecce Homo*, for example, Large outlines three possibilities in addition to his incipient insanity, suggesting that *Ecce Homo* is at once parody (xx), exemplary autobiographical imitation (xxi), and subjective literary fiction (xxii).[85] While I appreciate these insights, my suggestion is that a consideration of the work's rhetorical dimensions is helpful as a gateway into the deeper substantive questions posed by the text. The goal of this chapter is to explore the purpose of the foreground of *Ecce Homo* – the proud boastfulness that structures the whole – in light of Nietzsche's professed autobiographical goals, and in light of other prominent aspects of his philosophy. I argue that, as is the case with Rousseau, Nietzsche's autobiographical choices are shaped by other cultural and political goals; in *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche employs a personal rhetoric aimed at illuminating his teachings on contemporary culture, and at reinforcing his views on pity and compassion.

I begin with a discussion of the megalomaniacal surface of the work, which seems to be so much at odds with Nietzsche's authorial, pedagogical, and personal motives. Given the scope of Nietzsche's literary talents (of which he reminds us: "Before me one did not know what can be done with the German language – what can be done with language as such" *EH Books,* 4), and his professed desire to be understood and to teach,

[85] Recourse to arguments about Nietzsche's boundless subjectivity has become a kind of orthodoxy in Nietzsche scholarship, and Kofman and Large are far less guilty of this tendency than others (from Derrida on to Deleuze, O'hara, Nehemas, Thomas, Conway, Danto, and Schacht). Along with Kofman and Large, Michael Platt also provides a helpful scholarship on *Ecce Homo* (1993); concerning the works' seriousness, and *contra* the postmoderns, Platt states "it will be impossible to turn to this book and read it seriously, if we know it is not serious" (1993, 51). Two unpublished papers by Leon Craig (noted in the bibliography) have also proven helpful in this study of *Ecce Homo.* A good introduction to the problem of Nietzsche's subjectivity and relativism can be found in the introduction to Peter Berkowitz's *Nietzsche: The Ethics of an Immoralist.*

why does he employ what can often seem like an *anti*-rhetoric designed more to alienate readers than to attract and persuade? How are we to understand Nietzsche's autobiographical bravado? With these questions as my starting point, I make my way in the first half of the chapter through several interpretive possibilities. As is usually the case with Nietzsche, even simple questions become perplexing as one proceeds, and ever new questions emerge: How are we to understand the relationship between Nietzsche's outrageous works and their allegedly gentle author? Is the bombast rhetorical or sincere? To what degree, and towards what ends? While it is tempting to dodge these hard questions with allusions to Nietzsche's endless subjectivity, *Ecce Homo* does in fact provide some guidance here. In Part II of the chapter, I turn to more substantive matters, which means a turn away from Nietzsche's relational rhetoric of superiority towards what I call the super-affirmative character of the work. Having come to appreciate the dominating *pathos* of the work in the first half of the chapter, we are in a better position to appreciate its quieter, but still supremely confident, undertones, which demonstrate, among other things, Nietzsche's overcoming of nihilistic decadence, and affirmative embrace of the concept of *amor fati.*

I. Man and Author

Early Impressions

Even for Nietzsche it would have been difficult to come up with a bolder or more irreverent title than *Ecce Homo.* With these two words he takes on three world-historical roles: that of Pilate, that of Jesus, and that of the Apostle John. Latin for "Behold the Man," Nietzsche employs the phrase with which John's Pilate presents Jesus to a hostile Jerusalem (John 19:5), to write himself into the world. The title, which can also be

understood to mean simply "Behold Man," encapsulates Nietzsche's sacrilegious attempt to achieve a world-historical reversal of values and a new understanding of human life.[86] With the words *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche announces, not for the first time, his grand theological and cultural reversal, and posits himself as a new humanist model of Man, rooted in the search for truth. In its complex blend of weighty boldness and ironic sacrilege, the title could not be more offensive to Christian sensibility.

The subtitle of the work, "How One Becomes What One Is" (*Wie man wird, was man ist*), indicates in a seemingly more serious vein that *Ecce Homo* offers a broad lesson in human transformation and integrity. To state the matter clearly: the suggestion of the subtitle is that the book will tell the story of Nietzsche's transformation into his authentic self, in such a way that the reader might learn to do the same. The specific character of this transformation – from what? to what? – is of central concern to us as readers, and Nietzsche makes this a puzzle from start to finish. He warns us in the first aphorism of the work that he is concerned "above all" that he will be mistaken for what he is not, namely a "moral monster" (F 1); he opens the first section with a riddle ("as my father I have already died, as my mother I still live and grow old" (I 1); he cryptically proclaims

[86] The foreword to *Ecce Homo,* is full of New Testament allusions and provides an implicit commentary on the title's meaning. Though Nietzsche shares with Pilate a certain reluctance in his task – we learn in the foreword that it goes against the "pride of his instincts" to speak so directly about himself (F 1) – it is clear that, in taking on the mantle of the son of God, Nietzsche sacrifices pride for pride. Like Jesus, Nietzsche has apparently suffered (to the point where he is uncertain whether he lives at all, F 1), knows he will return only once he has been denied (F 4 and III 1, "some are born posthumously), and has found his contemporaries wanting ("the disparity between the greatness of my task and the *smallness* of my contemporaries has found expression in the fact that I have been neither heard nor even so much as seen" F 1). But while Jesus' pains would redeem and be redeemed through God's grace in the resurrection, as related by his disciples, Nietzsche also redeems himself in this life, and, as the redactor-disciple of the philosopher Dionysus (F 2), pronounces *himself* the future of mankind's hopes. Finally, while Jesus, according to John, came into the world to bear witness unto the truth (John 18:37), Nietzsche "bears witness" to *himself* (F 1), and, like Pilate (John 18.38, see also AC 46), questions the truth (F 3). Nietzsche goes further: "*Nitimur in veititum* [we strive after the forbidden]: in this sign my philosophy will one day conquer, for what has hitherto been forbidden on principle has never been anything but the truth.—" (F 3). For a general treatment of biblical language and allusions, see Duncan Large (2001).

himself "the *anti-ass par excellence* and therewith a world-historical monster […] in Greek, and not only in Greek, the *Anti-Christ*" (III 2); he is the opposite of the moralist (IV 3), but immoralism proves complex (see IV 4-9); the book ends with a refrain of uncertainty, when three times Nietzsche asks "– have I been understood?" (IV 7-9). A major challenge of the work is to discover what precisely Nietzsche's transformation into "what he is" involves, and how we might relate Nietzsche's experience to our own lives. The subtitle draws our attention to this riddling dimension of the work.

Of course, Nietzsche makes some aspects of "what he is" – or at least of what he takes himself to be – altogether plain. The infamous chapter titles of the autobiography, without parallel in the history of literature, indicate that, despite his initial protestations (F1), Nietzsche offers himself up for consideration with at least *some* relish and delight. The main section titles are fourfold, and organize *Ecce Homo* into the following themes: *Why I Am So Wise, Why I Am So Clever, Why I Write Such Good Books, and Why I Am A Destiny*. And so we learn before setting off that Nietzsche is wise and clever (*Weise* and *Klug*), he writes good books, and thinks himself to be, somehow, a "destiny" (*Schicksal*).[87] These titles flaunt Nietzsche's pride, and deepen the irony of the book's title; they also bespeak a flagrant disregard for modern peoples' sensitivity to human inequality. Indeed, these headings are so out of line with ordinary politeness that it is difficult to take them seriously. They are commonly cited as indicating either Nietzsche's mounting instability, or his perpetual ironic playfulness. And yet, while the titles seldom fail to evoke a grin, they are more than merely playful. In the very least, with his vaunting and amusing boasts, Nietzsche clearly wishes to provoke his readers' egoism. In this vein we might also note just how closely the chapter headings track onto the themes of that

[87] Platt suggests that the division into four parts mirrors the Gospels (1993, 50), and argues persuasively that the respective themes of the chapters are self-love, self-knowledge, teaching, and ruling (1993, 54-57).

other seminal work of provocative biographical philosophy – Plato's *Apology of Socrates*. While Socrates knows only of his ignorance, denies any cleverness in speech, writes no books, and is unsuited to public life, Nietzsche's chapter titles celebrate his embrace of both wisdom and cleverness, his writing of good books, and his public destiny (see Platt 1993 and Craig 1984). The reversal of Christian orthodoxy signaled by the title is complemented by the reversal of philosophic orthodoxy achieved by the chapter headings.

All this being said, the question of Nietzsche's seriousness and sincerity is a major difficulty in *Ecce Homo*. At this preliminary stage, we can say just a few things about the striking title and subtitles with confidence. First, the title of the work would be deeply offensive to any Christian, and probably even to any seriously faithful person. Second, the chapter headings would in addition chafe anyone committed to principles of humility or human equality. On the other hand, the title could provoke the proud as a powerful challenge, as well as appeal to the irreverent and cynical as a powerful joke; the chapter headings have a sacrilegious, humorous quality deriving from Nietzsche's simple disregard for ordinary human social sensibilities. As Duncan Large rightly points out, "*Ecce Homo* undoubtedly polarizes the reactions of its readers" (2007, xx): one is either repulsed or intrigued. The basic implication of this polarization is that, taken together, the superficial qualities of Nietzsche's autobiography work as an initial "filter" for his would-be audience. With his offensive bravado, he wards off some readers, while enticing others with irreverent daring. Granting this, the pressing question that arises is whether such reader-polarization is the incidental result of Nietzsche's self-disclosure, part of a careful rhetorical strategy, or some combination of the two. Here the text offers some assistance, since so much of the work involves reflections on writing.

Part III of *Ecce Homo* is devoted exclusively to Nietzsche's books and to the practice of writing. It is entitled "Why I Write Such Good Books," and contains passages that explain how he seeks both to exclude and entrap readers with his works. In section three of the chapter, Nietzsche explains that his books operate according to a principle of exclusion:

> Any infirmity of soul excludes one from them once and for all, any dyspepsia, even, does so: one must have no nerves, one must have a joyful belly. Not only does the poverty, the hole-and-corner air of a soul exclude it from them – cowardice, uncleanliness, secret revengefulness in the entrails does so far more: a word from me drives all bad instincts into the face. (III 3)

Here Nietzsche begins to highlight some of the positive qualities necessary for a good reader (lack of nerves, a joyful belly), but he focuses on those that exclude. In the same section Nietzsche goes on to indicate that this feature of his books is altogether intentional: "I have among my acquaintances several experimental animals on whom I bring home to myself the various, very instructive reactions to my writings" (III 3). He gives a four-fold description of such reactions, and, strikingly, all of them consist of *de facto* exclusions.[88] Nietzsche's experiments have shown him that his "friends," the "good" souls, the stupid, and the weak, fail to enter his world, and he continues to employ these findings with great relish in *Ecce Homo*.

One of the paradoxical effects of Nietzsche's catalogue of exclusions is that it flatters anyone unwilling to identify with the excluded parties. Nietzsche also provides numerous positive characterizations of his genuine readers' positive traits that are likely

[88] There are his "so-called friends" (who are bemused by his books, but not serious about the contents), the vicious readers, or "beautiful souls" (who are repulsed by them), Dull readers (generally standoffish, but, occasionally confess agreement on certain points; they are often associated with the German); any "feminism" (read: weakness) also results in exclusion. See also F1 and III 1 (where Nietzsche celebrates his not being read, and his not being understood).

to have a similar impact. Consider the rhetorical power of the following passage from the foreword:

> – He who knows how to breathe the air of my writings knows that it is an air of the heights, a *robust* air. One has to be made for it, otherwise there is no small danger one will catch cold. The ice is near, the solitude is terrible – but how peacefully all things lie in the light! How freely one breathes! How much one feels *beneath* one! […] – How much truth can a spirit *bear*, how much truth can spirit *dare*? That became for me more and more the real measure of value. Error (– belief in the ideal –) is not blindness, error is *cowardice*… Every acquisition, every step forward in knowledge is the *result* of courage, of severity towards oneself, of cleanliness with respect to oneself… (F 3)

This statement acts as a gatepost warning about Nietzsche's books – a boast that scares-off, but also poses an alluring challenge to would-be readers, who must be courageous, severe, and "clean" in a Nietzschean sense (see I 8) to learn from them. It also contains positive enticements, promising the peaceful illumination of all things, freedom, spiritual enlargement, and truth. Later sections echo these same themes. Nietzsche repeatedly emphasizes both the pride and the exquisite character of his books, and the fact that they call for readers both brave and delicate (see III 2, 3; III BGE 1). In return he promises privileged entry into his "noble and delicate world" (III 3).

Depending on the reader, then, Nietzsche's books are either repellent or attractive, offensive or enticing. They are meant to operate like selective magnets that push some readers away with a complex anti-rhetoric, while captivating and provoking others; the works after *Zarathustra* are designed to be even more selective – they are described as fishhooks for the very few (see III BGE 1).[89] *Ecce Homo,* written just two years after

[89] While Nietzsche bemoans the lack of fish "caught" by *Beyond Good and Evil*, he elsewhere admits to having readers of real genius (III 2), suggesting that his strategy has not been altogether in vain. *The Antichrist* seems to be an exception to the 'fishhook' rule, given its especially extravagant rhetoric (see Shapiro 129). The *Antichrist* also has a clear relationship to *Ecce Homo*, insofar as the latter seems to announce the arrival of the former. Nietzsche suggests that *Ecce Homo* is part of his onslaught on Christianity, and that it serves as a prelude to the whole "Transvaluation" in his letter to Brandes from November 20, 1888.

Beyond Good and Evil, is presumably part of this exclusive "slow search" for his relations (III BGE 1).

Author and Text

A difficulty with this suggestion arises in light of the fact that *Ecce Homo* is a self-portrait, and very often the self portrayed differs radically from the authorial voice we hear. For all of its bombast, a striking feature of the autobiography is Nietzsche's insistence on his own (supreme) kindliness and civility. This is especially true of the opening two chapters of the work where he focuses on himself, as opposed to his books. When it comes to the question of Nietzsche's willingness to employ rhetoric that repulses, one statement in particular stands out. He opens section four of "Why I am so Wise" with the following:

> I have never understood the art of arousing enmity towards myself – this too I owe to my incomparable father – even when it seemed to me very worthwhile to do so. However unchristian it may seem, I am not even inimical towards myself, one turns my life this way and that, one will only rarely, at bottom only once, discover signs that anyone has borne ill will towards me – perhaps, however, somewhat too many signs of *good* will… (*Wise,* 4)

Of course, this is a very paradoxical thing to say, for Nietzsche manages to sound arrogantly offensive even in the course of professing his incapacity for making himself disliked.[90] Furthermore, the passage follows an especially controversial and offensive section, a sample from which reads: "When I look for my profoundest opposite, ineradicable vulgarity of the instincts, I always find my mother and sister – to think of myself as related to such *canaille* would be a blasphemy against my divinity" (I 3).

[90] Hollingdale's "arousing enmity" is slightly too strong. The German is *Ich habe nie die Kunst verstanden, gegen mich einzunehmen*. Here Large's translation is more literal: "I have never understood the art of taking against me," but does not make much sense in English. The sense seems to be "I have never understood the art of setting [people] against me."

Through the remainder of the chapter the irony builds as Nietzsche continues to defend his utter lack of guile, born of utter – no, divine – superiority. In "*Why I am so Wise,*" we encounter a man of great equanimity and poise, who claims in the most provocative terms to be utterly ignorant in the art of provoking.

In the final section of the chapter, Nietzsche provides a clue as to how we might understand this paradox, by indicating that often his mere presence inadvertently causes offense, because he is incapable of hiding his disdain for others (I.8). For a moment we might wonder whether the same is true of his works – could they be merely incidentally offensive, the unwitting result of Nietzsche's peculiar authorial temperament? We have already seen some of what he thinks of his works; he further responds to our inquiry with the resounding opening line of "Why I Write Such Good Books": "I am one thing, my writings are another" (III 1). With this line Nietzsche encourages us to distinguish the writer from the work, the author from his autobiography. And yet the question still remains as to which is the 'truer' Nietzsche: day-to-day, model of civility Nietzsche, or the bombastic icon we know so well? Is the inflammatory surface of *Ecce Homo* (and of so many of Nietzsche's works) yet another 'mask' (see BGE §40) for the gentler Nietzsche we occasionally encounter in the work?

For a number of reasons, I believe that, however tempting it might be, it is important not to overstate the discontinuity between the 'true' Nietzsche and the surfaces of *Ecce Homo*. While the 'gentleman' Nietzsche is an important part of Nietzsche's self-portrait (and a part that we will return to), it is not immediately obvious that it is the heart of the portrait. After all, in *Ecce Homo* more than anywhere else, Nietzsche highlights the extent to which is he is bound up in his writing. The third chapter, which discusses his books in general and each work in particular, constitutes forty of the seventy-two sections of the work. And, as is surely already intimated in the above, when we look more

carefully at the substance of *Ecce Homo*, the man we find there has plenty in common with the loud rhetorician announced by the work's titles. Furthermore, Nietzsche warns his readers explicitly against the temptation to idealize him, and is quite happy not to be understood.[91] And while he knows he will be hard to understand, he also suggests at the start of "Why I Write Such Good Books" that he is not entirely to blame. As the first line of the chapter announces, Nietzsche takes care to distinguish between himself and his works, but the discussion that follows reveals the irony of the opening line. The continuity that exists between author and text is indicated in a complicated way early on, when Nietzsche takes up the question of his works' being understood: "It would be a complete contradiction of myself if I expected ears *and hands* for *my* truths already today: that I am not heard today, that no one today knows how to take from me, is not only comprehensible; it even seems to me right." The key claim here is Nietzsche's cryptic suggestion that it would be a complete contradiction of himself to expect his books to be understood by his contemporaries. The thought seems to be that it would be contradictory to expect understanding, given that the works have been composed in a certain way; by calling it a contradiction of himself, Nietzsche reveals just how closely he identifies with his books.[92] When Nietzsche goes on to remark, "I do not want to be taken for what I am not – and that requires that I do not take myself for what I am not," he

[91] And yet, at the start of *Ecce Homo,* Nietzsche provides an elaborate plea to his readers not to mistake him for what he is not. He contests that he is "not a moral-monster" (in the sense of moralizing monster), but rather is "antithetical to the species of man hitherto honoured as virtuous," and "would prefer to be even a satyr than a saint" (F 2). He is especially concerned that future readers will make him into an ideal of their own creation, and later on we learn that he has already seen it happen: "Whoever believed he had understood something of me had dressed up something out of me after his own image—not uncommonly an antithesis of me, for instance an 'idealist" (III 1). According to Nietzsche's understanding, such problems are predictable, and plagued Jesus too. See AC 31: "[sectarian veneration] extinguishes the original often painfully unfamiliar traits in the revered being – it even fails to see them," and later "all sectarians adjust their master into an apologia of themselves." Ultimately it seems that Nietzsche wants to be understood, but he warns his reader that this will not be an easy task.

[92] See Kofman (I, 22) for a discussion of Nietzsche's relationship to writing and textuality (that can be contrasted with Nehemas' problematic understanding of the same question in *Life as Literature*, 2005).

further distinguishes himself from the simpler, more affable and timely 'idealist' that he is foolishly mistaken for in his own day (see III 1 and 3). Nietzsche delights in such errors, but he is more truly akin to his untimely books than to his kindly person. Later on he will put it more succinctly: "I am not a man, I am dynamite" (*Destiny,* 1). Thus Nietzsche disavows any radical distinction between himself and his outrageous works.[93]

Heights and Abysses: The Pathos of Distance

The general character of *Ecce Homo* sustains the suggestion that Nietzsche is more akin to his bombastic, riddling works, than he is to his gentlemanly person: if anything, Nietzsche's day-to-day politeness is what serves as a mask, as does his calling our attention to it in *Ecce Homo.* My suggestion is that the substance of *Ecce Homo* discloses an individual full of the kind of audacity that is on display on the works' surfaces, such that the surface bravado is merely a reflection of Nietzsche's genuine sense of superiority as it is disclosed through the foremost *pathos* of the work*,* the *pathos of distance*.

The *pathos of distance* is perhaps *the* quintessential social passion in Nietzschean philosophy. It can be understood as Nietzsche's aristocratic counter to democratic compassion in the works of Rousseau. It is an especially prominent theme in the later works, beginning with Zarathustra, and often has an expressly political meaning. Zarathustra demonstrates the *pathos* vividly all the way through *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* as he expresses his vast superiority over everyone. He is the star who must descend to humanity (TSZ P 1), the scorner of the Last Man (TSZ P 5), the critic of the modern state

[93] As Michael Platt notes, however, Nietzsche does understand the difference. Nietzsche emphasizes self-love (especially in "Why I Am So Wise") because this is the foundation of all other virtues and achievements. Platt notes, I think correctly, that Nietzsche recognized that his works and life depended on his actual life being good (53). The activity of writing, and even the "perfection" of the works, rest on the fundamental goodness of life that Nietzsche tries to demonstrate in *Ecce Homo*.

and market ("Of the New Idols," "Of the Flies in the Marketplace"), he is disgusted and depressed by the people (see "Of the Rabble," and "Of Redemption": "Truly, my friends I walk among men as among the fragments and limbs of men!"), all alone in his beneficent superiority (see "The Night Song"), disgusted not just by the lowly but also by the strongest ("The Convalescent"); Zarathustra must even overcome his pity for the higher men ("The Cry of Distress"). In several melodramatic episodes, the mere existence of the vastly inferior, and the feeling of distance that this inspires, makes Zarathustra question the worth of absolutely everything (see especially "On the Vision and the Riddle" and "The Convalescent").

In works subsequent to *Zarathustra,* Nietzsche articulates the *pathos* more directly. In *Beyond Good and Evil,* it is the subject of the first aphorism of the ninth part, "What is Noble":

> Without the *pathos of distance* such as develops from the incarnate differences of classes, from the ruling caste's constant looking out and looking down on subjects and instruments and down from its equally constant exercise of obedience and command, its holding down and holding at a distance, that other, more mysterious *pathos* could not have developed either, that longing for an ever-increasing widening of distance within the soul itself, the formation of ever higher, rarer, more remote, tenser, more comprehensive states, in short precisely the elevation of the type 'man,' the continual 'self-overcoming of man,' to take a moral formula in a supra-moral sense. (§257)

This passage nicely captures both the political and the psychological dimensions of the *pathos*. In its cruder political form, it is a feeling of distance between rulers and ruled, between different kinds of men, much like what Zarathustra expresses.[94] Psychologically

[94] Nietzsche speaks of the *pathos of distance* in political terms in the rhetorically charged *Antichrist*:

> No one any longer possess today the courage to claim special privileges or the right to rule, the courage to feel a sense of reverence towards himself and towards his equals—the courage for a *pathos of distance*… Our politics is *morbid* from this lack of courage! – The aristocratic outlook has been undermined most deeply by the lie of the equality of souls; and if the belief in the 'prerogative of the majority' makes revolutions and *will continue to make them* – it is Christianity, let there be no doubt about it, *Christian* value judgment which translates every revolution into mere blood and crime! Christianity is a revolt of everything that crawls along the ground directed against that which is *elevated*: the Gospel of the 'lowly' *makes* low… (43)

speaking, the *pathos* represents, as Nietzsche beautifully puts it, an "ever-increasing widening of the distance with the soul itself." Such an expansive soul-condition originates in conditions of political inequality, and Nietzsche is confident too that it diminishes in periods of equality: "'Equality,' a certain actual assimilation, which the theory of 'equal rights' merely expresses, is of the essence of decline: the gulf between man and man, rank and rank; the multiplicity of types; the will to be oneself, to stand out – everything I call *pathos of distance* – is proper to every strong period" (TI, Expeditions of an Untimely Man, 37).[95] For Nietzsche, then, plurality of ranks is a good sign for the soul. The *pathos of distance* is a relational social passion born of the recognition of difference, and in *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche provides an unapologetic exemplification of its power.

The gulf that separates Nietzsche from his contemporaries is a perennial theme of *Ecce Homo*. More often than not, the boasts within *Ecce Homo* surpass those of the chapter headings in their conceit. As we have already seen, even when Nietzsche describes his personal affability, and the gentleness with which he treats everyone, a boast is implicit. *Ecce Homo* shows that his lack of interest in being understood derives not from some hidden "ideal" of affability or modesty typical to his bearing, but first and foremost from his vast superiority: he openly proclaims what Rousseau so cunningly disguises. Much of the work is a meditation on the vastness of Nietzsche's spirit as compared to the rest of mankind. Some examples should suffice to illustrate this point.

From the opening chapter of *Ecce Homo*, "Why I am so Wise," the feeling of distance is a prominent theme. Part of the riddle with which Nietzsche opens the book involves the image of a ladder. When he explains his paternal and maternal origins, he

[95] The relationship between the *pathos of distance* in the soul and the *pathos of distance* between individuals is a controversial one, since it immediately raises essential political questions. These questions are explored more fully later in this chapter and the next.

explains that they derive, respectively, "from the highest and the lowest rung of the latter of life, at once *décadent* and *beginning*" (I 1). Nietzsche credits his father with a high degree of delicacy, typical of the morbid *décadent* (and with one foot *beyond* life), while he takes his maternal origins to represent everything base (I 3). This "twofold origin" has given Nietzsche a "grand neutrality" with respect to the overall problem of life. He explains: "I have a subtler sense for signs of ascent and decline than any man has ever had. I am the teacher *par excellence* in this matter – I know both, I am both" (I 1).[96] As we proceed through *Ecce Homo*, it is clear that Nietzsche's own sense of distance with respect to his contemporaries starts as a child (see II 2), and it influences his life at key moments that can be loosely regarded as spurring on a life-long ascent. Those who lack a "delicate feeling for distance" are typically baser sorts – the sort prone to pity (I 4) – whereas a sense of distance is a sign of human potential (IV WC 4, "The first thing in which I 'test the reins' of a person is whether he has in him a feeling for distance, whether he sees everywhere rank, degree, order between man and man, whether he *distinguishes"*). The feeling of distance informs Nietzschean psychology from the time of *Schopenhauer*, where Nietzsche sheds a very personal but critical light on the relatively confused condition of the scholar (see UM III 6, Nietzsche's superiority partly consists in his contrasting capacity to become "*one* person"). The *pathos of distance* similarly motivates Nietzsche's break with Wagner, as well as the Schopenhaurian pessimism and *décadence* that characterizes the early works (see III HATH 2, "The beginnings of this book belong within the weeks of the first Bayreuth Festival; a profound estrangement

[96] A latent irony of the opening chapter is that neither parent's role in Nietzsche's life is especially positive. Though Nietzsche's father is at least credited with delicacy, it takes the form of a morbid *décadence* (I 1, 4-6) that Nietzsche must learn to overcome, and Nietzsche's treatment of his mother in the original is shocking (see Large's translation, I 3). As he says in the section suppressed by his sister, "you are *least* related to your parents: it would be the most extreme sign of vulgarity to be related to your parents: it would be the most extreme sign of vulgarity to be related to one's parents"; in the end Nietzsche mostly credits himself and his "great health" for the heights he eventually attains.

[*Fremdheit*] from all that surrounded me there is one of its preconditions," see also III HATH 1).[97]

Nietzsche's ascent is also spurred, we learn, by his terrible decline in health during the same period, his own experience of the lower-rungs of human weakness (see I 1-2, I 6; II 2; III HATH 4): "I made out of my will to health, to *life*, my philosophy… For pay heed to this: it was in the years of my lowest vitality that I ceased to be a pessimist: the instinct for self-recovery *forbade* to me a philosophy of indigence and discouragement" (I 2).[98] Nietzsche credits his protracted illness, as he credits his time spent as a scholar, for the psychological insights that ultimately inform his *pathos of distance*.[99] Nietzsche has a fundamental health which he credits for overcoming of *décadence* ("As *summa summarum* I was healthy, as corner, as specialty I was *décadent,*" I 2), but it is clear that the *pathos of distance* grows out of experiences, and understanding, of both high and low. Consider in this vein Nietzsche's description of his particular area of expertise:

> To look from a morbid perspective towards *healthier* concepts and values, and again conversely to look down from the abundance and certainty of *rich* life into the secret labour of the instinct of *decadence* – that is what I have practiced most, it has been my own particular field of experience, in this if in anything I am master. I now have the skill and knowledge to *invert perspectives*. (I 1)

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[97] When he goes on to describe the kind of estrangement he felt, it is most unflattering of the German public, and reminiscent of Zarathustra's speech "Of the Rabble": "Not an abortion was missing, not even the anti-Semite. – Poor Wagner! To what a pass had he come! – Better for him to have gone among swine! But among Germans!" (III HATH 2)

[98] See also II 2: "There was a complete lack of the subtler kind of selfishness, of a commanding instinct's *care*; it was treating oneself as equivalent to everyone else, a 'selflessness', a forgetting of one's distance—something I will never forgive myself. When I was almost done for – *because* I was almost done for – I started to reflect on this absurdity fundamental to my life – 'idealism.' *Illness* was what made me see reason."

[99] Compare I 1, I 6, II 2 and III HATH 3-4 to AC 29-32. Jesus, according to Nietzsche, suffered from an acute but ultimately morbid sensitivity to all things, which ultimately thwarted his ability to preserve himself through the denials and rejections required by life (AC 29-30). He thus died on the cross as a beautiful example of a quasi-buddhistic saying-yes to life and love at any cost (AC 32, 35, 42).

Nietzsche's experience of strength and weakness is essential to his philosophic depth, and the *pathos of distance* emerges out of, and is legitimated by, Nietzsche's having personal experience of various intense psychological conditions.

Nietzsche's manifold experience of the *pathos of distance* influences the trajectory of his life. And though the question of whether Nietzsche ever fully overcomes his *décadence* is an important one, to which we will return, in *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche is unequivocal about the heights of his mature self and his mature works. We learn, for example, that Zarathustra is a work that resides in an "*azure* solitude" beyond the grasp of even a Goethe or Shakespeare: "It is in precisely this compass of space, in this access to opposites that Zarathustra feels himself to be the *highest species of all existing things*" (III TSZ 6). When Nietzsche speaks of his works more generally, he has the following to say:

> To enter this noble and delicate world is an incomparable distinction – to do so one absolutely must not be a German; it is in the end a distinction one has to have earned**.** But he who is related to me through *loftiness* of will experiences when he reads me real ecstasies of learning: for I come from heights no bird has ever soared to, I know abysses into which no foot has ever yet strayed. […] there is altogether no prouder and at he same time more exquisite kind of book than my book. (III 3)[100]

This passage nicely captures both poles – heights and abysses – of the *pathos of distance*. Here we learn that "*loftiness* of will" is an important dimension of "relatedness" to Nietzsche. In another line from *Books*, Nietzsche again assures us of the excellence of his present situation. Comparing himself today to the Nietzsche of *Schopenhauer as*

[100] See also III 4:

> No one has ever had more of the new, the unheard-of, the really new-created in artistic means to squander. That such a thing was possible in the German language remained to be proved: I myself would previously have most hotly disputed it. Before me one did not know what can be done with the German language—what can be done with language as such. The art of *grand* rhythm, the *grand style* of phrasing, as the expression of a tremendous rise and fall of sublime, of superhuman passion, was the first discovered by me; with a dithyramb such as the last of the *third* Zarathustra, entitled 'The Seven Seals,' I flew a thousand miles beyond that which has hitherto been called poesy.

Educator, he says: "What I am today, *where* I am today – at a height at which I no longer speak with words but with lightening bolts – oh how far away I was from it in those days! – But I *saw* the land – I did not deceive myself for a moment as to the way, sea, danger – *and* success!" (III UM 3).

Nietzsche's emphasis on the *pathos of distance* throughout *Ecce Homo* cuts against the suggestion that the bombast of the work is meant rhetorically, for he never steps back from his own radical superiority and that of his works.[101] Rather, it seems that part of the intention of the work is to explore and offer a demonstration of the *pathos of distance*, thereby educating the reader in "ascent and decline," as promised early on (I 1).

Is *Ecce Homo*, then, just a piece of earnest naiveté? My suggestion is that, far from being naïve, *Ecce Homo* is thoroughly rhetorical, but that in it Nietzsche employs a novel kind of rhetoric that rests on shocking truths, rather than distortions, to achieve its intended effect. As we saw in the earlier treatment of Rousseau, typically rhetoric involves some kind of distortion, manipulation, or repackaging of the truth, in order to meet the audience halfway in the act of persuasion. The rhetoric of *Ecce Homo* is sincere in its message, relying instead almost exclusively on the character of the audience to achieve its intended impact. Nietzsche can exclude some and seduce others using what might be called a rhetoric of arresting honesty.[102] The bombast of *Ecce Homo* can still be considered rhetorical in that it is by design, and intended to have a particular impact on the reader – and a different impact on the different sorts of readers who constitute the

[101] In the few instances where Nietzsche qualifies his claims to absolute pre-eminence, the qualifications are so immodest as to reaffirm the bombast. Compare, for example, Nietzsche's claim in IV 6 to be the only person ever to feel above Christianity; this claim is contradicted in IV 7, where Nietzsche says he is the seventh person in history to feel this way. Even if Nietzsche is the thousandth person to feel this way, the point is still the same: he vastly surpasses almost everyone who has ever lived. That said, the qualifications do prove that Nietzsche's bombast is, strictly speaking, an exaggeration.

[102] I do not mean to suggest with my phrase "rhetoric of arresting honesty" that there are no exaggerated claims in the book. Nor do I mean to suggest that shocking honesty is Nietzsche's only kind of rhetoric.

various rungs on a Nietzschean ladder of rank – but it is not rhetorical in the sense that it is a vast distortion of the truth.

By being unusually truthful about what other philosophers keep hidden, Nietzsche achieves his rhetorical goal of selective exclusion, but unlike Nietzsche's personal habit of alienating "those with bad blood," this is not something Nietzsche does unwittingly. For the most part, *Ecce Homo* offers a veritable depiction of Nietzsche's self-assured self-understanding. The major irony of the works' rhetorical bombast thus lies in its honesty. Traditionally, say in Socrates' case, or in Rousseau's, irony can be seen as a habit of dissembling on the part of the speaker or writer that works to mask superiority (see BGE 40, and Strauss 1964, 51). *Ecce Homo,* however, manages to be ironic without this kind of deception. The reversal of the trope of philosophic modesty is in itself humorous, but the real irony is to be found in the subsequent discovery of Nietzsche's honesty. In *Ecce Homo***,** Nietzsche calculatingly relates his honest thoughts about himself, which have the impact they do not so much because these claims are insane or exaggerated, but because we moderns are hyper-sensitive to claims to superiority – we conceal them from ourselves. Nietzsche flouts this democratic inclination in a flagrant but honest way aimed at calling attention not only to himself, but also to what he thinks are increasingly dangerous democratic prejudices.[103] Nietzsche's rhetoric of arresting honesty in *Ecce Homo* can thus be seen as an integrated part of his broader critique of democratic morality.

[103] It is not clear that Nietzsche altogether enjoys the bombast – for he remarks at the outset of *Ecce Homo* that to speak out about himself in this way offends the pride of his instincts (F 1).

II. Beyond Rhetoric?

Affirmation and Amor Fati

At least among philosophers, Nietzsche is uniquely upfront about his high self-regard in relation to others, and this honesty constitutes his main rhetorical ploy. Of course, the ultimate goal of a study of *Ecce Homo* is to get beyond the rhetoric, in order to achieve a genuine understanding of what Nietzsche "is," and of how he becomes "what he is," presumably for the sake of personal understanding, and perhaps even for the sake of personal transformation. And though a full treatment of these themes is beyond the scope of the current project, it is important to say something more regarding Nietzsche's self-portrait. More particularly, I would like to discuss a feature of *Ecce Homo* that becomes far more apparent only once one becomes accustomed to the jarring bombast of the work. This is its powerful affirmative quality – or what I refer to as the "super-affirmative" in Nietzsche.[104] Unlike the *pathos of distance*, which is a relational quality, this super-affirmative feature of the work bespeaks Nietzsche's irrepressible and self-sufficient cheerfulness. Strikingly, and in contrast to the popular perception of Nietzsche as the philosopher of simple, agonistic strife, some of the most remarkable claims which Nietzsche makes about himself in *Ecce Homo* are not concerned with how he stands in relation to others, but instead bespeak his independence from others, and even reveal what might be seen as a spirit of psychological equanimity.[105] What is perhaps most interesting about these statements is that, again unlike Nietzsche's expressions of his

[104] The best definition of the super-affirmative that I have found comes from AC 54: "Everything is perfect – thus speaks the instinct of the most spiritual, the affirmative instinct." Large refers to this quality of *Ecce Homo* as the "absolute affirmative," and I agree with him that this constitutes one of the most beautiful aspects of the book (1995). For other discussions of the affirmative in Nietzsche, see Kofman (I, 34-36), Brobjer (2003), and Platt (1993, 64-79).

[105] The most prominent proponent of such agonism is Carl Schmitt, but other more recent and less controversial thinkers (such as Giorgio Agamben) have taken up the torch of agonism, often for the sake of democratic ends. See Dana R. Villa, "Democratizing the *Agon*: Nietzsche, Arendt and the Agonistic Tendency in Recent Political Theory" for a good survey and defense of this latest spin on Nietzsche.

overall superiority and feeling of distance, these claims tend to contrast subtly with what he says about Zarathustra in *Ecce Homo*, and with how Zarathustra is depicted in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Exploring the powerful affirmative quality of *Ecce Homo* thus brings us to the brink of important question of Nietzsche's relationship to Zarathustra, a question that quietly pervades the whole autobiography, and especially the final chapter of the work, "Why I Am A Destiny." The question of Nietzsche's relation to Zarathustra is a controversial and complex one that, again, can only be treated partially here, but it is my view that *Ecce Homo* can help us to clarify certain aspects of the controversy and help us to understand Nietzsche better. I proceed here by highlighting some of the affirmative statements I have in mind, before turning to the question of Zarathustra.

Apart from the beautiful epigraph of the work, the first, and most complete, statement of Nietzschean super-affirmation in *Ecce Homo* comes in the second section of "Why I Am So Wise," and describes the person who has "turned out well" (or who demonstrates *Wohlgerathenheit* – turned-out-welledness). Only at the end of the following long description of this impressive type does Nietzsche admit that he is describing himself:

> A human being who has turned out well does our senses good: […] he is carved out of wood at once hard, delicate and sweet-smelling. He has a taste only for what is beneficial to him; his pleasure, his joy ceases where the measure of what is beneficial is overstepped. He divines cures for injuries, he employs ill chances to his own advantage; what does not kill him makes him stronger. Out of everything he sees, hears, experiences he instinctively collects together *his* sum: he is a principle of selection, he rejects much. He is always in *his* company, whether he traffics with books, people or landscapes: he does honour when he *chooses*, when he *admits,* when he *trusts.* He reacts slowly to every kind of stimulus, with that slowness which a protracted caution and a willed pride have bred in him – he tests an approaching stimulus, he is far from going out to meet it. He believes in neither 'misfortune' nor in 'guilt': he knows how to *forget* – he is strong enough for everything to *have* to turn out for the best for him. Very well, I am the *opposite* of a *décadent*: for I have just described *myself*. (I 2)

The rhetorical impact of the third person here is notable. With it Nietzsche not only comes close to achieving a morsel of modesty, but he also calls our attention to the offensiveness of high self-praise. The elaborate self-description emphasizes knowledge and enjoyment of the beneficial, strength, fortitude, exclusivity, pride, composure, and immoralism. It is a description of comprehensive and self-sufficient human health that generally avoids mention of comparative characteristics. Taken in context, it is clearer that the passage describes what Nietzsche has become, the dominant aspect of "himself" rather than the whole story, for the section begins, "setting aside the fact that I am a *décadent*, I am also its antithesis." The passage makes clear, however, that Nietzsche's experience of *Wohlgerathenheit* is primary to his experience of *décadence*, in that it is a consequence and outcome of his *fundamental* good health, as already discussed (I, 2: "A being who is typically morbid cannot become healthy, still less can he make himself healthy; conversely, for one who is typically healthy being sick can even be an energetic *stimulant* to life, to more life"). The conclusion of the passage from I 2 suggests that such health is so great that it knows even how to forget, which, recalling Rousseau, raises the question of whether Nietzsche's life-affirmation demands a kind of self-forgetting.

In "Why I am so Clever," Nietzsche goes even further with his self-portrait, concluding the chapter by describing features of his character that are likely to come as surprises to anyone familiar with his works. In section nine, in the process of explicitly answering the question of how he has become what he is, he claims:

> No trace of *struggle* can be discovered in my life, I am the opposite of an heroic nature. To 'want' something, to 'strive' after something, to have a 'goal,' a 'wish' in view - I know none of these things from experience. Even at this moment I look out upon my future – a *distant* future! – as upon a smooth sea: it is ruffled by no desire. I do not want in the slightest that anything should become other than it is; I do not want myself to

> become other than I am… but that is how I have always lived. I have harboured no desire. (Clever 9) [106]

Several things are remarkable here. First of all, the statement bespeaks a typically "philosophic" approach to life: free of external motives and constraints, fully grounded in the present, contemplative, and self-affirming. What distinguishes Nietzsche's from the Classical understanding of philosophy is the near-Buddhistic denigration of desire. Nietzsche elsewhere emphatically denies what the ancients speak of as the philosopher's *eros* for the truth (not to mention other desires), and instead speaks of the creative will to power, propelled from within. Still, the passage offers a glimpse of just how tranquil Nietzsche understands his activity to be. With its allusion to the Future as an unruffled sea, it is even reminiscent of Rousseauian reverie. Which brings us to the second point: such a posture to life seems contrary to Nietzschean philosophy, which so often insists not only on a "goal" or "task" (see, for example, TSZ 1001 Goals, AC 1: "Formula for happiness: a Yes, a No, a straight line, a goal"), but also on constant struggle and willful self-overcoming. Can it possibly be the case that Nietzsche has not experienced striving? If he has not, then why is strife such a prominent theme of his philosophizing? It is astonishing that Nietzsche says "that is how I have always lived," for if this is true, this implies that Nietzsche's works are full of analyses of experiences that he has not fully shared – again, something that seems counter to Nietzsche's basic outlook. With these compelling but surprising affirmative remarks, the question of Nietzsche's ultimate sincerity returns. Is the super-affirmative aspect of *Ecce Homo* the deepest truth about Nietzsche's experience, and his talk of striving merely rhetorical, or is the super-

[106] See also TI, "Four Great Errors" 2: "Every error, or whatever kind, is a consequence of degeneration of instinct, disaggregation of will: one has thereby virtually defined the *bad*. Everything *good* is instinct—and consequently easy, necessary, free. Effort is an objection, the *god* is typically distinguished from the hero (in my language: *light* feet are the first attribute of divinity)."

affirmative a distortive lie – the kind of philosophic ideal Nietzsche expressly warns us against from the outset?

As if to address our suspicions, we get the following passage in section ten:

> At no moment of my life can I be shown to have adopted any kind of arrogant or pathetic posture. The *pathos* of attitudes does *not* belong to greatness; whoever needs attitudes at all is *false*… beware of all picturesque men! – Life has been easy for me, easiest when it demanded of me the most difficult things. Anyone who saw me during the seventy days of this autumn when I was uninterruptedly creating nothing but things of the first rank which no man will be able to do again or has done before, bearing a responsibility for all the coming millennia, will have noticed no trace of tension in me, but rather an overflowing freshness and cheerfulness. I never ate with greater relish, I never slept better. – I know of no other way of dealing with great tasks than that of *play*: this is, as a sign of greatness, an essential precondition. (II 10)

Again, the passage contains several remarkable claims. Perhaps the one most relevant to this study is his assertion that he is altogether without affectation – what he here refers to as the "*pathos* of attitudes." The suggestion seems to be that such attitudes exemplify a seductive falseness that betray a wish that things be otherwise. The line also, if it is to be taken at face value, confirms my thesis that *Ecce Homo,* to the extent that it is rhetorical, employs a rhetoric of arresting honesty. Nietzsche's actual "attitude," to the extent that he has one, is not arrogant or pathetic, but one of "overflowing freshness and cheerfulness." Again, the contrast with Rousseau, in all his picturesque (and false) misfortune, is striking. In another reversal of the Rousseauian rhetorical position, but expressing a thought similar to what might have been Rousseau's genuine experience as discussed in Chapter 2, Nietzsche claims that his life has been easiest when it demanded the most difficult things of him, including the "heaviest" tasks that characterize his sort of life. The passage also sheds new light on the 'gentleman' Nietzsche, who is so polite and pleasant: perhaps that part of Nietzsche's portrait is ultimately honest, since it is consistent with these and subsequent descriptions of Nietzsche's innermost nature. As we will see, however, even the most tranquil Nietzsche is hardly innocuous. And on the whole,

Nietzsche's position here is so foreign to ordinary experience that it is even more unbelievable than his claims of extraordinary superiority and extraordinary tranquility. Again, the question of Nietzsche's sincerity here is a pressing one.

The capstone of Nietzsche's affirmative outlook, as it is expressed in *Ecce Homo*, is his doctrine of *amor fati*, or the love of destiny. Doubtless one of the most powerful statements in the whole work comes at the end of section ten of "Why I Am So Clever":

> My formula for human greatness is *amor fati*: not wanting anything to be different, not forwards, not backwards, not for all eternity. Not just enduring what is necessary, still less concealing it – all idealism is hypocrisy in the face of what is necessary – but *loving* it… [II 10]

Here is a powerful articulation of Nietzsche's non-desiring, wholesale embrace of all necessary things past, present, and future. The phrase *amor fati,* which derives originally from the Stoic philosopher Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations,* makes its first appearance in Nietzsche's *oeuvre* in the *Gay Science*. There, he posits the "formula" as a goal, and explains that the wholesale embrace of existence involves a new attitude toward low and ugly aspects of life:

> *Amor fati*: let that henceforth be my love! I do not want to wage war with the ugly. I do not want to accuse, I do not want even to accuse the accusers. Looking aside, let that be my sole negation! And all in all, to sum up: I wish to be at any time hereafter only a yes sayer!" (GS 276).

That which is expressed as a goal in the *Gay Science* is presented as the essence of Nietzsche's "self" in *Ecce Homo*. In a later chapter of the work he declares: "*amor fati* is my innermost nature" (III WC 4). With the embrace of *amor fati,* Nietzsche denies harboring desires and aversions, exemplifying instead a principle of near-comprehensive affirmation. His astonishingly ambitious hope, which he calls the "great noontide," is that

something like this supreme "coming-to-oneself" might one day take place on the part of mankind, "for the first time as a whole" (III D 2).[107]

How are we to understand these unqualified super-affirmative statements on the part of Nietzsche? If one thing is clear, it is that they raise a lot of doubts and questions, and, at first blush at least, seem to betray irreconcilable tensions in Nietzsche's self-presentation. How is it that the philosopher of will to power can claim never to have strived? How can he call *amor fati*, which seems to involve the absence of action and goals, his innermost nature, if the first time he mentions it the doctrine is itself affirmed as a goal? How can he deny that he strives after external goals even as he describes the task of the great noontide? Such hopes seem altogether incompatible with the non-desiring, reality-affirming poise of *amor fati*. How can he at once calmly love and affirm all that is past and will be, while at the same time promoting the radical transformation of mankind's moral outlook? Is this Nietzsche at his most duplicitous or his most incoherent? Does the "present" embrace of *amor fati* somehow demand a retrospective falsification of the past? Or is Nietzsche's presentation of willing really something that he advocates for others but does not himself experience and care about?

These are some of the questions that we are left pondering based on the super-affirmative dimensions of *Ecce Homo.* In order to begin to address them, it is helpful first to articulate another theme lurking in *Ecce Homo,* which is the contrast between Nietzsche and Zarathustra. Then we will turn to Part IV of *Ecce Homo*, where Nietzsche provides us with further insights into the relationship between *amor fati* and Nietzsche's own *will to power.*

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[107] It is not entirely clear what Nietzsche means by mankind as a whole, but presumably what he envisions is a turning of the moral tide such that Christian morality is no longer universally dominant. See TI "How the 'Real World' Finally Became a Fable."

Beyond Zarathustra?

In addition to the *pathos of distance*, then, *Ecce Homo* also embodies, perhaps more than any other work, Nietzsche's spirit of affirmation. The work is characterized by a certain sprightliness about even the most serious things. It recalls the stage of the child in Zarathustra's story of the "Three Metamorphoses" even more than Zarathustra himself does. Indeed, what is most notable about this aspect of *Ecce Homo* is the systematic way in which Nietzsche hereby portrays himself as different from Zarathustra, and the systematic way in which *Ecce Homo* differs from *Zarathustra* in its overall literary effect. My suggestion is that *Ecce Homo* guides us through the interpretive difficulties pertaining to the super-affirmative primarily by means of a contrast with the character of Zarathustra. While the overall meaning of Zarathustra in Nietzsche's thought is obviously an enormous interpretive question, a consideration of the contrast Nietzsche designs between himself and his Zarathustra in *Ecce Homo* provides some relatively straightforward (and previously neglected) insights into their relationship, and into some of the more extravagant super-affirmative claims of *Ecce Homo* concerning the doctrine of *amor fati*. To state the matter most simply: Nietzsche is happy, while Zarathustra suffers. Nietzsche portrays himself as a tranquil but cheerful and thriving human exemplar, whereas Zarathustra comes closer to a struggling and tragic super-human hero.[108] While Zarathustra is tragic and induces tragic pity, Nietzsche portrays himself as perfectly post-tragic; he displays the self-satisfied perfection of a pagan god.

In the most general sense, this seems to signify Nietzsche's having overcome the problems that plague Zarathustra throughout the whole four-part saga that is *Thus Spoke*

[108] This is an unorthodox way of looking at Zarathustra, and seems to cut against Nietzsche's praise of Zarathustra in *Ecce Homo*. While it is impossible to fully defend my claim here, I do think that Nietzsche stands above his Zarathustra in important respects. On this question, see Strauss ("Note on the Plan"), Lomax (2005, 79-118), Lampert (2001), and Platt (1993, 64-79).

Zarathustra. Though Zarathustra and Nietzsche share much in common – including, most especially, the *pathos of distance,* the "azure" heights of their outlook, and even the task of the great noontide (see III TSZ 8) – *Ecce Homo* also makes it clear that there are important differences between them. In light of the affirmative passages from *Ecce Homo* underscored above, there are several differences between Nietzsche and Zarathustra that we can affirm with some confidence. First, whereas Nietzsche has "turned out well," with all that this entails, Zarathustra as we encounter him is very much caught up in the processes of striving and growth. Unlike Nietzsche, Zarathustra is not "always in *his* company" but expresses great loneliness and yearning for others (see "The Child and the Mirror," "The Night Song," and "The Stillest Hour"); whereas Nietzsche describes a life without desire and strife, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is the story of Zarathustra's great struggle and suffering with the teaching of the eternal return (and its companion problems of the spirit of gravity, disgust with mankind and its history, and pity for the higher man); and while Nietzsche claims that he lives in a constant state of poise, without the "*pathos* of attitudes," Zarathustra occasionally displays his extreme spiritual agony rather dramatically (see for a sample "The Prophet," "Of the Vision and the Riddle," and "The Convalescent"; see also "The Sorcerer" for a parody of this tendency in Zarathustra). But if the culminating thought of *Ecce Homo* is *amor fati,* the culminating difference between the two works involves the difference between *amor fati* and the eternal return – and the question of how Nietzsche overcomes or avoids difficulties that give Zarathustra so much grief, in order to "become what he is."

The similarities and differences between Nietzsche and Zarathustra, and the questions that they raise, are not of merely incidental interest to us as readers of *Ecce Homo*. In fact, in a way the work quietly revolves around the question of Nietzsche's world-historical transformation *beyond* the outlook of a Zarathustra. Intimations of the

problematic of Zarathustra pervade the whole work. Chapter one concludes with a long passage outlining Nietzsche's greatest danger, that of disgust at mankind, a danger he and Zarathustra share.[109] In the section of "Why I Write Such Good Books" devoted to Zarathustra, Nietzsche explains what he refers to as "the psychological problem in the type of Zarathustra" at some length, and it relates clearly to problems we have already encountered in Nietzsche's psychology:

> How he, to an unheard of degree says No, *does* No to everything to which one has hitherto said Yes, can nonetheless be the opposite of a spirit of denial; how he, a spirit bearing the heaviest of destinies, a fatality of a task, can nonetheless be the opposite – Zarathustra is a dancer – : how he, who has the harshest, the most fearful insight into reality, who has thought the 'most abysmal thought,' nonetheless finds in it no objection to existence, nor even to the eternal recurrence of existence – rather one more reason *to be himself* the eternal Yes to all things, 'the tremendous unbounded Yes and Amen'… (III TSZ 6)

The difficulties Nietzsche describes here involve tensions between Zarathustra's yes and no-saying, and it is not clear that these tensions are in fact resolved in the course of that work. Two somewhat different tensions can be identified. On the one hand, Nietzsche asks how Zarathustra can reject all previous religion and philosophy – how he can be a no-sayer in this intense way – and yet still be considered an affirmative spirit. Crucially, this is an inversion of the question of how Nietzsche's super-affirmative *amor fati* is compatible with his ambitious moral and cultural project; for Nietzsche our question is how his great satisfaction can be compatible with the destructive desire for change, whereas for Zarathustra the question is how such a tremendous destroyer can still be

[109] See I 8 and IV 6, and AC 38, 39. In the course of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, this theme takes a number of different iterations, all of which thwart Zarathustra's embrace of the Eternal Return. For example, we witness Zarathustra's disgust at man in "On the Rabble," but in "Of Redemption" the danger of disgust is expressed in a more sophisticated concern about the limits imposed on man by history. In "Of the Vision and the Riddle," Zarathustra speaks of the Spirit of Gravity, who is related to the problem of history and the ultimate meaningless of human striving. In "The Convalescent' Zarathustra is overcome by disgust at the abysmal thought of the lowliness even of the best men: "The greatest all too small! – that was my disgust at man! And eternal recurrence even for the smallest! That was my disgust at all existence!"

thought of as "the opposite of a spirit of denial." In both cases the question is how these two things go together. The tension between Zarathustra's Yes-saying and No-saying is related to a tension between the eternal return and the will to power. How does the creative will to power, which involves destruction of the old as well as a comprehensive yes-saying, relate causally to the idea of willing an affirmation of all that has been and will be to eternity? How can it make sense to affirm again for all eternity something (namely the past) that you are at the same time creatively destroying on behalf of the immanent future? Put more succinctly: how can willing change, as the will to power demands, contribute causally to the eternal return of the same? It is already a metaphysical challenge to see how willing the eternal return contributes causally to the reality of the eternal return. Squaring the doctrine of eternal return with the doctrine of the will to power is an even graver difficulty.

The second part of the psychological problem in the type of Zarathustra hearkens back to the danger of disgust at man. How is it that Zarathustra can affirm reality, and even the eternal return of reality, once he has understood the extent to which human life has heretofore been dominated by sickness and rabble, and once one has understood the limits that this places on the future of man (on this problem of the limits imposed by history, see especially TSZ, "Of Redemption"). For Zarathustra, the weight of the thought of the eternal return seems too much to bear – saying No to so much of what has existed makes it difficult to will the "unbounded Yes." Though Nietzsche admits early on that this part of the problematic is a danger for him, *Ecce Homo,* with its embrace of *amor fati* already in Chapter 2, seems to show that it no longer plagues him. It is not until "Why I Am A Destiny" that Nietzsche explicitly delineates the relevance of Zarathustra to story of *Ecce Homo*: "Have I been understood? The self-overcoming of morality through truthfulness, the self-overcoming of the moralist into his opposite – *into me* – that is what

the name Zarathustra means in my mouth" (IV 3). Zarathustra, then, represents a transitional stage on the path to the Nietzschean self.

How is it that Nietzsche overcomes morality through truthfulness, thus escaping Zarathustrian angst, and embracing *amor fati*? This is a complicated question. Indeed, the whole of *Ecce Homo* is concerned with the problem of how Nietzsche moved from his early *décadence* philosophy of pessimism and moralism to the affirmative philosophy of the future, and the story of his various writings illuminates this movement (in addition to charting occasional deviations off-course). We have already explored aspects of this transition through a discussion of the *pathos of distance* and the role that Nietzsche's illness played in his self-overcoming. We should also note that the whole work, which consists of seventy-two total sections, is beautifully structured around the transformation away from décadence towards his "innermost nature." Early on, Nietzsche makes much of the fact that he hits his nadir in his thirty-sixth year, which is also the age of his "décadent" father's death; the one thing he does not inherit from his father is the yes to life (I 3). He, however, enjoys "the great health" that allows him to turn his illness into a philosophy of life (I 2); this crisis and movement took place during his thirty-sixth year, after the composition of the *Untimely Meditations* and before *Human All Too Human*. The center of *Ecce Homo* occurs between the discussion of these works; the last section of the discussion of the *Untimely Meditations* is the thirty-sixth section of the work, and the discussion of *Human All Too Human* is the thirty-seventh. This movement marks the central shift in Nietzsche's thought, the overcoming of décadence and beginning of the philosophy of the future.[110] Even if we are unwilling to grant Nietzsche his most

[110] Nietzsche's transformation in *Ecce Homo* also dovetails with his reading of Christ as it is developed in the *Antichrist*. This is signaled by the parallel construction of the *Anti-Christ.* While the center of *Ecce Homo* marks Nietzsche's overcoming of décadence, brought on in serious physical illness, the center of *The Anti-Christ* marks Nietzsche's Christ's failure to do the same. Illness brought Nietzsche to the brink of dissolution, and he learned that life meant saying no (to the demands of others, for example) in order to

extravagant claims about his own tranquility, we should still grant that this transition from decadence to fundamental health represents a clear movement away from the angst and pessimism of Nietzsche's youth, and of parts of *Zarathustra*, towards the complicated yes-saying that dominates *Ecce Homo*.

But the central shift in Nietzsche's thought does not constitute the whole change and transformation beyond the difficulties of a Zarathustra: we still have no explanation of how Nietzsche overcomes the problem of disgust at man, nor do we have a clear solution to the apparent contradiction between *amor fati* and creative ambition on display in so much of Nietzsche's thought – especially the final works. For this we have to turn to the final chapter of Nietzsche's autobiography, entitled "Why I Am A Destiny."

Why Nietzsche Loves His Destiny

The final chapter of *Ecce Homo* consists of nine sections, and involves a dense consideration of Nietzsche's status as an "immoralist." Nietzsche uses this concluding discussion to reaffirm his own importance, as well as to distinguish himself from the priests and saints of the past (IV 1, 7), and from his own Zarathustra (IV 4-7).[111] Through a series of insights about the denials of the immoralist, the chapter obliquely answers the question of how Zarathustra represents the "self-overcoming of the moralist into its

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save his strength. Jesus, faced with his own excessive sensibilities (AC 29-30), succumbed where Nietzsche convalesced—"Denial is precisely what is totally impossible for him" (AC 32). Nietzsche, on the other hand, learned to say no for the sake of life. We should also note that while Jesus lacked the no-saying denial necessary for living, Zarathustra has trouble achieving the "eternal yes." He thus comes to light as representing an inversion of the psychology of the redeemer, someone who struggles to affirm life once he sees the "most abysmal thought."

[111] See IV 2: "I am by far the most terrible human being there has ever been; this does not mean I shall not be the most beneficent. I know joy in destruction to a degree corresponding to my *strength* for destruction – in both I obey my Dionysian nature, which does not know how to separate No-doing from Yes-saying. I am the first *immoralist*: I am therewith the *destroyer par excellence*." In the rest of the chapter Nietzsche seems to be indicating that he is more of an immoralist than Zarathustra, but in a paradoxical kind of way: his denials are more targeted.

opposite," into Nietzsche (IV 3). It helps us to understand how Nietzsche comes to terms with the past (and his disgust at man), while also addressing the question posed by the chapter's title, insofar as it indicates how Nietzsche understands his fate and future. While the nine dense aphorisms that make up the concluding section of Nietzsche's final work do not answer all of our lingering questions about Nietzsche, they do succeed in pointing us down some fertile paths of inquiry.

Nietzsche uses the opening aphorism of *Destiny* to pronounce his immense prospective status and power. It is here that Nietzsche declares "I am not a man I am dynamite," and describes the fated consequences of his life:

> When truth steps into battle with the lie of millennia we shall have convulsions, an earthquake spasm, a transposition of valley and mountain such as has never been dreamed of. The concept politics has then become completely absorbed into a war of spirits, all the power-structures of the old society have been blown into the air – they one and all reposed on the lie: there will be wars such as there have never yet been on earth. Only after me will there be *grand politics* on earth. –

With his description of the convulsions to come, Nietzsche shows remarkable prescience. While the extent to which he actually foresees the gross violence of the 20th Century is unclear, especially insofar as his description is of a terrible convulsion of spirits, it is clear that he anticipates powerful changes.[112] Then, in section 2 Nietzsche reminds us of just how much his project, even in its benevolence, depends on destruction of the old. In the course of Part IV, we learn that Nietzsche's revaluation of values requires dynamite-like destruction of Christianity in particular. And in section 8 Nietzsche reiterates the bold opening of *Destiny,* stating that "The *Unmasking* of Christianity is an event without equal, a real catastrophe – he breaks the history of mankind into two parts. One lives

[112] Many interpreters suggest that Nietzsche's grand politics includes only spiritual warfare (see Kofman II, 346-348). While I agree that cultural "warfare" is what Nietzsche is most essentially concerned with, he is not so naïve as to think that spiritual warfare will preclude 'real' violent effects. This is why *Ecce Homo* and the *Antichrist* cannot be read as merely playful and ironic works; they are also cynical and destructive, see Letter to Brandes November 1888.

before him, one lives *after* him…" Nietzsche frames the discussion of Part IV, then, with strong statements about the grand historical scope of his motives and goals. He is the "first *immoralist*" and the *destroyer par excellence.* Here as elsewhere, he is far from modest about the context in which he envisions his works.

In section three of *Destiny*, Nietzsche turns directly to the meaning of Zarathustra within this larger project. It is here that he raises the question of what it is that Zarathustra's name "means precisely in [his] mouth," and he discloses that he chose the figure of Zarathustra for his philosophic drama because Zarathustra was the very first moralist, "the first to see in the struggle between good and evil the actual wheel in the working of things" (IV 3). Because Zarathustrian morality (like Christian morality) places such emphasis on probity ("Zarathustra is more truthful than any other thinker" IV 3), Nietzsche believes that Zarathustra should be the one to begin the process of immoralism: "Zarathustra *created* this most fateful of errors, morality: consequently he must also be the first to *recognize it*" (IV 3). In the subsequent sections (IV 4-8), however, Nietzsche shows that Zarathustra's understanding (and rejection) of morality may only be partial. In brief, Nietzsche's expression "immoralist" involves "two denials [or rejections, negations: *Verneinungen*]" (IV 4), namely the denial of moral men and the denial of morality as such (IV 4); Nietzsche identifies the first denial with Zarathustra (IV 4-5), and the second with himself (IV 6-9).[113] This turns out to have significant consequences, for in the course of *Destiny,* Nietzsche gradually reveals how his own understanding of morality and history surpasses even that of Zarathustra, and ultimately makes him more powerful, and more satisfied, than his character-creation. In coming to

[113] To a certain degree it is impossible fully to differentiate between Zarathustra and Nietzsche himself, because, as Nietzsche explains in IV 3, Zarathustra represents a psychological process of overcoming ("of the moralist into its opposite"). Therefore, Nietzsche and Zarathustra share a lot in common, such as the *pathos of distance* and the disgust at mankind. Part IV of *Ecce Homo* is therefore especially helpful because it illuminates some of the most subtle differences between them.

terms with Nietzsche's account of his immoralism, we gain insights into some of the questions raised previously about his understanding of the eternal return, his embrace of *amor fati,* and his own relationship to will to power.

Nietzsche emphasizes the importance of understanding the respective import of the two moral denials in IV 4. The first denial is of the type hitherto regarded as the "*good*, the *benevolent, beneficent,*" and the second is of "a kind of morality which has come to be accepted and to dominate as morality in itself – *décadence* morality, in more palpable terms *Christian* morality" (IV 4). Though Nietzsche articulates the two "contradictions" (*Widersprüchen*) in this order, he goes on to explain that the second negation "might be seen as the decisive one," since the over-valuation of the good and the beneficent is, by and large, a symptom of *décadence* morality and weakness. *Décadence* morality causes the saying-yes-to and affirmation of the so-called Good because it is incapable of saying no, whereas "ascending and affirmative life" involves denial and destruction (IV 4). Only after clarifying this point – the fact that, in his understanding, décadence morality is the cause of the over-valuation of those regarded as good, and hence its denial is of primary importance – does he go on to discuss the two denials or negations more fully, beginning with the "first," or derivative, denial (of the good and beneficent types of men).

The rest of section four and all of section five consist of an elaboration on the aspect of Nietzsches' immoralism that he most definitely shares with Zarathustra: the rejection of the good type of man. Both Nietzsche and Zarathustra see that the Good live under conditions of great falseness, and have the need to lie to themselves about reality. More than anything, the good are governed by the desire "not to see at any price what is the fundamental constitution of reality"; they are especially loathe to recognize the need for distress of any kind (IV 4). But whereas Nietzsche and Zarathustra both recognize the

Good for the lying self-deceivers that they are, Zarathustra "feels [or senses, *empfindet*] them to be the *most harmful species of man,* because they preserve their existence as much at the expense of *truth* as at the expense of the *future*" (IV 4). Zarathustra sees the Good as the most harmful because they live at the expense of the strong and the wicked, at the expense of "*his* type of man, a relatively superhuman type" whom the good and just would call a *devil* (IV 5). Because the good threaten the strong Zarathustrian type, he sees them as the most dangerous. Nietzsche reminds us in the course of the discussion of Zarathustra's denial of the good and the just that these are the men whom Zarathustra calls "the ultimate men" and "the beginning of the end" (IV 4).

The first indication that Nietzsche gives of his disagreement with Zarathustra is the following: "Fortunately the world has not been constructed for the satisfaction of instincts such as would permit merely good-natured herd animals to find their narrow happiness in it" (IV 4).[114] It is a remarkable claim because it shows quite explicitly that Nietzsche no longer shares Zarathustra's fear and horror at the last man, or at mankind in general. While Zarathustra feels horror at man in general (IV 5), and Nietzsche shares in

[114] This line recalls Nietzsche's claim earlier on in *Ecce Homo* that "we seek after the forbidden" (I 1), and his corresponding claim that heretofore the truth has been forbidden. Nietzsche seems to trust that the human is such as to seek beyond the falsified existence of the last man – but it is also important to recognize that at least part of this hope derives from Christianity itself, and its emphasis on self-examination and truthfulness. This drive to truthfulness has become second nature in modern men partly because of the Christian influence, and so it is that, according to Nietzsche, Christianity contains the seeds of its own destruction. On the Christian virtue of probity in Nietzsche, see BGE §46, 53-55 and GM III 24. Nietzsche also clearly has a deep respect for Christianity insofar as it has deepened the soul of man, making him more inward-looking and psychologically interesting (see BGE §186, 188). He, furthermore, is clearly impressed with the astonishing power of Christianity as a historical force (see BGE 46, AC, entire) and shows clear admiration for Jesus (see AC 29-32); according to the "rules of engagement" in *Ecce Homo,* his choice to attack Christianity so vehemently is further evidence of respect (I 7). What is perhaps less clear is whether or not, all things considered, Nietzsche affirms Christianity. My argument in this chapter is that he does not – or, stated more precisely, I would say that Nietzsche affirms Christianity only to the extent that it is a necessary part of history, but would not will its eternal return. He can come to terms with it, and will give credit where credit is due for the good that has come of Christianity, but at the end of the day Nietzsche is anti-Christian, and regrets the power it has had in human history. This seems to me to be a position consistent with the foreground of his texts.

this danger (IV 6), the indication seems to be that, in keeping with his embrace of *amor fati,* Nietzsche's disgust with mankind has somehow been assuaged. With the second denial we begin to understand the specific grounds of his transformation from disgust to hope: it has something to do with the general character of mankind in his day, and with the fact that "the world has not been constructed" in such a way as to satisfy the last man.

Nietzsche begins section six by reminding the reader that he has not yet discussed the second, decisive sense of his immoralism. After the two previous sections, which involve much discussion of Zarathustra, Nietzsche takes pains with the opening of section six to make the second denial his alone: "– But there is also another sense in which I have chosen for myself the word *immoralist* as a mark of distinction and badge of honour; I am proud to possess this word which sets me off against the whole of humanity" (IV 6). Nietzsche goes on to explain that he has not just seen the problem of the good man more clearly than anyone else, but the problem of Christian morality as such – a problem which, according to the Nietzsche of *Ecce Homo*, has infected all prior thinkers. It is in this context that Nietzsche calls himself the first *psychologist*, "before me there was no psychology," and, in a sure reference to Plato, accuses all prior thinkers of inhabiting the world as though it were a cave so deadly that it required the poison of idealism and world-calumny (IV 6). Nietzsche soon admits that it is here that he has experienced disgust at man (IV 6), and suggests that his disgust arises from the sheer extent of Christianity's influence – the power of the "real Circe" of humanity, the will to the lie (IV 7). In other words, Nietzsche appears to be astonished and disgusted by the extent of humanity's self-deception: "Not to have opened its eyes here sooner counts to me as the greatest piece of uncleanliness which humanity has on its conscience, as self-deception become instinct, as a fundamental will *not* to observe every event, every cause, every reality, as false-coinage *in psychologicis* to the point of crime" (IV 7). Most of the

rest of section seven consists in a loud tirade against, or *Verneinung* of, Christian morality. The tirade concludes: "This sole morality which has hitherto been taught, the morality of unselfing, betrays a will to the end, it denies the very foundations of life" (IV 7). Given the vehement character of Nietzsche's denial, it is difficult to understand how his immoralism could be a source of hope.

Indeed, it is clear that Nietzsche is exaggerating in section 6, in several respects. First of all, whereas elsewhere Nietzsche grants that Christian morality is not the only kind of morality that has ever been taught – consider his discussions of slave *and* master morality in the *Genealogy* and *Beyond Good and Evil,* of pre-Socratic tragic morality in *The Birth of Tragedy,* of the noble morality of the future in Part 9 of *Beyond Good and Evil,* and of Buddhist and Hindu thought in the *Antichrist* – here he speaks as though morality has only ever been one thing. This is not atypical in Nietzsche, and the exaggeration here replicates his tendency to overstate the all-pervasiveness of Christianity in the modern world. The second exaggeration is Nietzsche's suggestion that he is the first psychologist and immoralist, and that no one previously had seen through Christian otherworldliness and world-calumny. Though it may be true that Nietzsche is the first to openly declare himself an immoralist, it is not true that he is the first "psychologist" to see through moral conventions: recall his discussion in *Daybreak* of the "evil" Rousseau (§499), a manifestation of Plato's own "evil principle" (§496). It is also difficult to see exactly where Nietzsche's own personal insights depart from those of Zarathustra.

Nietzsche implicitly acknowledges his exaggerations in the subsequent section. There are two moments in the course of section seven where Nietzsche lifts the veil on his own personal outlook, and steps back from his extreme denunciation of Christian morality. The first hint is subtle but important: whereas in section six Nietzsche claims

that he is the first and only true psychologist, in section seven he admits in passing that there may have been "five or six" other such "moments" in history, and that he represents the seventh. This is striking because it is an implicit acknowledgement that his account of what has gone before has been exaggerated, and on some level even a lie (we will have the chance to come back again to this ever-present question of Nietzsche's honesty in *Ecce Homo*). Would this truth about prior truthful moments not also have to mitigate Nietzsche's disgust? The second, more drastic moment comes at the very end of the section, on the heels of his claim that the dominant morality denies the very foundations of life:

> – Let us here leave the possibility open that it is not mankind which is degenerating but only that parasitic species of man the *priest*, who with the aid of morality has lied himself up to being the determiner of mankind's values – who divines in Christian morality his means to *power*… And that is in fact *my* insight: the teachers, the leaders of mankind, theologians included, have also one and all been *décadents: thence* the revaluation of all values into the inimical to life, *thence* morality … *Definition of morality*: morality – the idiosyncrasy of *décadents* with the hidden intention of *revenging themselves on life – and* successfully. I set store by *this* definition. (IV 7)

In section four, when Nietzsche explains his two immoralisms, he says that the rejection of morality is primary because it is the causal source of the dominance of the Good men, and therefore of the need to negate them. Here in the remarkable conclusion to section seven, Nietzsche goes further – and this seems to be where he breaks more clearly with Zarathustra – by tracing the causal trajectory of *décadence* morality itself. With apparent pride he declares this *his* insight into this history: the discovery of the causal role of the priestly type in determining mankind's values. Unlike Zarathustra, who thinks the Good are the most harmful, Nietzsche narrows the field of his concern and blame, targeting the priestly "species of man" as the genuine culprits of history, the genuine source of human degeneration. With a brief encapsulation of the major argument of the *Genealogy* (see III GM: "This book contains the first psychology of the priest"), Nietzsche accuses the

priests of lying their way to power and revenge on life. Christian morality constitutes their special instrument of choice.

To be clear, the difference between Nietzsche and Zarathustra on the role of the priests is not immediately obvious. After all, Zarathustra does deny and oppose the Good, and he recognizes the priests as belonging among them. He therefore recognizes that the priests are sickly, and not representative of ascending life. These insights are evident in "Of the Priests," the chapter of *Zarathustra* devoted to the priests, where Zarathustra feels great compassion for the suffering of the priests, and recognizes how they are sickly and full of shame regarding existence. Zarathustra even recognizes the ugly counterfeit and lying involved in the priestly endeavor – he criticizes their bluster, as well as the gaudy bloodiness of their means – but his overwhelming outlook towards them is still one of pity and compassion. He refers to the small intellects of the priests, and to their fundamentally sheeplike character: "Truly, these shepherds, too, still belonged among the sheep!" ("Of the Priests," 116; see also "Of the Preachers of Death"). In general contrast to Zarathustra's gentleness with the priests (to which Nietzsche brings our attention in IV Z 6), Nietzsche's treatment of the priests is harsh and extreme, especially in the late works. He again and again calls our attention to the shrewdness of the priests, and to their incredible capacity for cynical manipulation of others. Nietzsche credits the priests with far more intelligence and conniving than Zarathustra does: his priests are more like wolves than shepherds. Furthermore, they are not simply several powerful shepherds among the corrupted good, they are the deepest source of the corruption of the good (and, ultimately, of the strong as well, through their doctrines of guilt and punishment, and pity for the weak – themes explored at length in *The Genealogy of Morality,* and *Beyond Good and Evil,* and which we will explore further in Chapter 5). While Zarathustra intuits that the priests are foremost among the weak in terms of sickliness and corruption,

Nietzsche goes further and deeper in his analysis of the priestly type, illuminating the priests' specific role in the moral history of Christianity. While more could be done to untangle and show the character of the differences between Zarathustra and Nietzsche, in *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche highlights his own superior insight into the priests. As we will see, this is an insight that arguably shapes Nietzsche's own literary choices, including the very composition of *Zarathustra*.

Nietzsche's understanding of the priestly type is obviously an important theme in his corpus, but the clarification of the priestly role in history has a special role to play at the end of his autobiography. For Nietzsche highlights this particular insight as the source of his own grand destiny. The second 'denial' – the denial of Christian morality, defined as the product of the idiosyncratic revengefulness of *décadents* – is the one which Nietzsche describes as the source of his particular destiny in section 8. Why is the insight so especially significant? As we see in what follows, Nietzsche's certainty that contemporary *décadence* morality is the idiosyncratic consequence of a small group of powerful leaders has two vital consequences in Nietzsche's life and work. It reconciles him with mankind in general, and inspires him to attempt his own world-historical moral revolution. Through his account of the priests, Nietzsche discloses the rationale behind his own extreme rhetoric.

Nietzsche's insight into the power of the priests is also an insight into the innocence of mankind in general – it is the insight that allows him to disagree with Zarathustra about the threat posed by the last man, and the dangerousness of the Good, and thus to move beyond the danger of disgust at mankind.[115] Though Nietzsche acknowledges that the Good exist at the expense of the stronger types, he sees that they

[115] On this point, see Kofman II, 363-364. Kofman recognizes the hopefulness that emerges for Nietzsche in this definition of morality, but does not spell out the implications of this for our understanding of Zarathustra.

are not altogether at fault for their own particular brand of blindness. Instead, he sees them as the self-deceived targets of the lying priests of antiquity, and while he finds it astonishing that the lie could have worked its way so deeply into mankind's instincts (see IV 7), Nietzsche also indicates that he has reached heights from which he finds the phenomenon of Christian morality amusing (at least part of the time, see AC 36, 38, and 39).[116] Thus, with the insight into the idiosyncratic character of the course of history, Nietzsche is released from the spirit of gravity that plagues Zarathustra, who, with the teaching of the eternal return, demands that one, through one's willing of the return, intentionally assign future meaning and purpose to what in the past has been achieved through mere accident and chance. Because Zarathustra does not pinpoint the priests as the cause of the rise of the Good, he is excessively weighed down by his conception of human nature. What Nietzsche understands, and Zarathustra must learn, is that the good – contemporary moral men and their "beautiful souls" – are largely a result of a historical fact that was not strictly necessary: the rise of contemporary morality is the outcome of idiosyncratic historical causes, not the fatality of nature. While what is past is past, and hence *is* necessary, it is easier to affirm in the light of an understanding of its contingent character. Granting that priestly purpose is still purpose of a kind, Nietzsche names this cause idiosyncratic: were it not for the priests, things might have been otherwise.

If, with the doctrine of *amor fati*, Nietzsche is committed to loving all that is necessary, his insight into the priests makes the past a whole lot more lovable. Nietzsche also seems to be free of the longing for the eternal that is manifest in the eternal return;

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[116] "From a lofty standpoint, this strangest of all facts, a religion not only determined by errors but inventive and even possessing genius *only* in harmful, *only* in life-poisoning and heart-poisoning errors, remains a *spectacle for the gods* – for those divinities which are at the same time philosophers and which I encountered, for example, during those celebrated dialogues on Naxos. In the hour when their *disgust* leaves them (*and* leaves us!) they become grateful for the spectacle of the Christian: perhaps it is only for the sake of *this* curious case that the pathetic little star called Earth deserves a divine glance and divine participation." (AC 39)

amor fati just embraces the necessary (which does not, we have just learned, include the dominance of Christian morality), and, as generations of scholars have discovered, it is hard to see how the eternal return is necessary. *Amor fati* is thus much more human, and less idealistic and dogmatic, than the doctrine of the *eternal return*. While *Ecce Homo* seems, with its emphasis on *amor fati,* to affirm the eternal return, my own, somewhat tentative, suggestion is that Nietzsche's love of fate is actually something quite different.[117] This helps to explain why Nietzsche never embraces the eternal return in his published writings: it is always an experimental thought, one perhaps aimed at helping modern men wean themselves from idealism, but, unlike *amor fati,* it is not a doctrine that he ever holds as his own.

The insight into the power of the priests in history helps to cure Nietzsche of his disgust at mankind's past; it also, I contend, can be credited with inspiring Nietzsche's vision for, and embrace of, the future. I mean by this to suggest that in recognizing the power of the priests, Nietzsche becomes heartened about the potential power of his own idiosyncratic project and counter-movement, and inspired to reverse the moral tide by means of a new rhetorical vehemence. This is a controversial claim, because Nietzsche is constantly denying, especially in *Ecce Homo*, that he has religious motives of any kind. In the first section of "Why I Am A Destiny," for example, having just announced that he is not a man but dynamite, Nietzsche protests "with all that there is nothing in me of a founder of a religion – religions are affairs of the rabble, I have need of washing my hands after contact with religious people … I do not *want* 'believers,' I think I am too

[117] While it is tempting to conflate *amor fati* and the *eternal return* – and most scholars do so – even Zarathustra never embraces the eternal return in his own name the way Nietzsche speaks of *amor fati*. In *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche refers to the eternal return several times: he raises an objection to it in I 3, and three times refers to it in relation to Zarathustra (III BT 3, III TSZ 1 and 6). For helpful discussions of the problems associated with the eternal return, see Heidegger (1991), Löwith (1944), Lomax (2005), and Hatab (2005).

malicious to believe in myself, I never speak to masses" (IV 1). And of course, as we have seen, Nietzsche rails against the priestly types as dangerous liars; throughout *Ecce Homo* he portrays them as altogether contrary to his honest self (see III BT 1, III D 2, IV 7). If dishonesty and cynical lying – or "idealism" – is *the* feature of the priests, then how can honest Nietzsche imitate them without compromising himself? Or, put in another way, if Nietzsche has overcome his disgust, why does he so often rail and fulminate, especially in the later works? As we will see in what follows, throughout *Ecce Homo* there is good evidence that Nietzsche sought to imitate the priestly types, that doing so involved a certain kind of falsification, and even that his success in having done so constitutes the source of his confidence regarding his own particular destiny, and explains his own particular love of fate. These suggestions are also further substantiated in passages from the *Antichrist*.

As other commentators have noted, the closing sections of *Ecce Homo* are marked by a haunting refrain: Nietzsche opens each of sections seven, eight, and nine with the question "Have I been understood?" In section three, Nietzsche had asked the same question, just prior to explaining that Zarathustra represents the transformation from the moralist into himself, indicating that Nietzsche's relationship to Zarathustra in some way constitutes an especially important part of his identity (that is to say, of his "being understood"). Some commentators (such as Conway, Hollingdale, and Young) have taken the repetition in Part IV to represent Nietzsche's swan song, and growing frustration at being unrecognized and misunderstood. As we have seen, Nietzsche explicitly denies experiencing such frustration in the course of *Ecce Homo*, and I argue that we should take these denials to be sincere. What, then, explains the emphatic return to the question of "being understood" at the end of *Ecce Homo*? Rather than representing Nietzsche's increasing frustration, Nietzsche uses this refrain to call our attention to the

significance of his explicit *answer* to the question, which occurs in the section of "Why I Write Such Good Books" devoted to the *Genealogy*. The answer to the question of Nietzsche's "being understood" occurs in the course of an earlier discussion that foreshadows the themes of Chapter IV. Having raised the question of why it was that the priestly type had so much power, Nietzsche says:

> Answer: *not* because God is active behind the priests, which is no doubt believed, but *faute de mieux* – because hitherto it has been the only ideal, because it had no competitors. […] What was lacking above all was a *counter-ideal – until the advent of Zarathustra.* – I have been understood. (III GM)

Here again Nietzsche emphasizes that it is not by virtue of genuine *right* that the priests have gained and held power: it is *not* because they are guided by God, but because an alternative moral narrative has been lacking. Translated into the language of Part IV, this means that the rule of the priests persisted not by virtue of God's guidance, but because of chance. Here in the course of Part III, Nietzsche is more explicit about his own role in the history of moral history. He is the author of the competing "counter-ideal" [*Gegen-Ideal*] to priestly morality; he has "been understood" once he is recognized as the neo-priestly author of *Zarathustra*.

In calling Zarathustra a counter-ideal, Nietzsche implicitly acknowledges a surprising willingness to dissemble and engage in the kind of idealization and falsification that he criticizes so starkly elsewhere (see, for example, F 2-3; AC 38). When commentators read Nietzsche's later works as manifesting his growing frustration and instability, they demonstrate their failure to understand this radical dimension of his final period. What looks like the *pathos* of growing frustration and alienation is part of a self-conscious rhetorical venture, born of Nietzsche's insight into the power of the priests and aimed at undermining contemporary moral norms. As if to highlight the fact that the composition of Zarathustra originated in his insight into priestly morality (the revelation

of which closes section 7), Nietzsche opens section 8 of *Destiny* with the following disclaimer: "I have not just now said a word that I could not have said five years ago through the mouth of Zarathustra" (IV 8). Though the statement seems intended to effect a *rapprochement* between Nietzsche and his protagonist, the real import of the line lies in its disclosure of the timing of the insight into priestly power (as pre-Zarathustrian, see also III D 1), and therefore in its indication of the self-consciously rhetorical character of Zarathustra and the subsequent works. That Nietzsche writes *Zarathustra* having already achieved his insight into the historical role of the priests, and in order to provide a world-historical counter-ideal, is perhaps best indicated by the pseudo-biblical tone of that work. Even so, it is surprising that Nietzsche would compose a work like *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and deny his protagonist his own decisive insight into the moral history of mankind. Why would this be necessary? My suggestion is twofold. On the one hand, perhaps Nietzsche hopes the pseudo-religious teaching of the eternal return will help to fill the vacuum that comes with the death of God, and thus fulfill an important role in the cultural education of mankind. On the other hand – and I justify this suggestion more fully in the next chapter – it seems to me likely that Nietzsche hopes considering and reflecting on Zarathustra's agonizing experiences will induce thinking and self-understanding on the part of his readers.

In section 8 of *Ecce Homo,* however, Nietzsche provides a simpler explanation for the rhetorical character of the later works. Nietzsche declares that the exemplars of Christianity have become fateful *"because they exercise fascination*" (IV 8); understanding this popularization through the "exercising of fascination" is key to understanding Nietzsche's counter-project.

Immoral Lying: Nietzsche's Antichrist

To better defend my controversial claim about Nietzsche's willingness to imitate priestly rule, and to better understand the rhetorical dimension of this literary endeavor, it is helpful at this point to digress for a moment into the *Antichrist*, where these themes are discussed explicitly.

The *Antichrist* was written at around the same time as *Ecce Homo*, and shares many of the autobiography's themes (insofar as they are signature Nietzschean themes), but it also has the flavor of something like a manifesto. It is short, rhetorically dramatic, and controversial; it is easy to see even just in the title how the work might serve as a counterpiece to *Ecce Homo*. There, Nietzsche makes it clear that, despite his sometimes virulent criticisms of the ascending priestly class in the contemporary West, he is not altogether opposed to "priestliness" as such. What surfaces in the *Antichrist* is a complex blend of disgust and admiration for the priestly capacity for lies and falsification, and a corresponding openness regarding the importance of employing similar means when necessary. Nietzsche takes up the question of lying in sections 55 and 56 of the *Antichrist*. In 55 Nietzsche examines the relationship between lies and convictions, and offers the following definition of the lie: "I call a lie: wanting *not* to see something one does see, wanting not to see something *as* one sees it: whether the lie takes place before witnesses or without witnesses is of no consequence" (55). Nietzsche identifies the priests as those who shrewdly insert the lie of revelation wherever they sense the weakness of their reasoning (see AC 55), and he contrasts these lies to convictions, which are lies grown stale through their unconscious employment in the service of ulterior ends. Though one might expect Nietzsche to inveigh against priestly lying insofar as it can lead to the kinds of convictions and beliefs he so adamantly opposes (see section 54), he instead concludes section 55 with a surprising revelation: "the right to lie and the

shrewdness of a 'revelation' pertains to the type priest, to priests of *décadence* as much as to priests of paganism"; he then adds parenthetically that "pagans are all who say Yes to life, to whom 'God' is the word for the great Yes to all things." At the start of 56, Nietzsche finally admits:

> – Ultimately the point is to what *end* a lie is told. That 'holy' ends are lacking in Christianity is *my* objection to its means. Only *bad* ends: the poisoning, slandering, denying of life, contempt for the body, the denigration and self-violating of man through the concept sin – *consequently* its means too are bad. (56)

With this Nietzsche at once continues his condemnation of Christian morality, and acknowledges that lying and vast exaggeration are consistent with his own pagan project.

Why would such lying be necessary to him? Speaking as a free spirit and scientist in section 13, Nietzsche offers the following historical explanation:

> We have had the whole *pathos* of mankind against us – its conception of what truth *ought* to be; every 'though shalt' has hitherto been directed *against* us…. Our objectives, our practices, our quiet, cautious, mistrustful manner – all this appeared utterly unworthy and contemptible to mankind. – In the end one might reasonably ask oneself whether it was not really an *aesthetic* taste which blinded mankind for so long: it desired a *picturesque* effect from truth, it desired especially that the man of knowledge should produce a powerful impression on the senses. (13)

With this passage, Nietzsche takes sides with the modest sciences against ancient dogmatic conceptions of truth, and also locates an explanation for the power of these old truths: the falsely affecting aesthetic of Christian millennia. Here, Nietzsche's use of the word "picturesque" is loaded with irony, for, according to other passages of the *Antichrist*, the power of the Christian aesthetic derives from the grotesque vision of the crucifixion. Throughout the *Antichrist* Nietzsche repeatedly uses the example of martyrdom, and of Jesus on the cross in particular, as a striking example of the power of faulty priestly interpretation, and the reliance on spectacle rather than reasoning for proof (see AC 53, and 54: "fanatics are picturesque, mankind would rather see gestures than listen to *reasons*"; see also GM I 15, and TSZ "On Reading and Writing" and "On the

Priests").The works of Nietzsche's final period, from Zarathustra on, reflect Nietzsche's self-conscious recognition of the need for a counter-rhetoric with which to combat the "picturesque" roots of *décadence* modernity. This conscious decision, and not growing alienation and frustration with the reception of his works, is what accounts for the extreme rhetoric of the final period.

It also helps to explain the extreme political arguments of Nietzsche's final period. Just as an affective, and sometimes ugly, counter-rhetoric is needed to counter millennia of Christian spectacle, so too is a counter-politics needed to counter centuries of Christian democratization. In Nietzsche's treatment of Rousseau we see how displeased he is by the French Revolution and its moral legacy, and how he blames Rousseau for contributing to its power. He is altogether aware of the revolutionary danger involved in strong rhetoric; in the later works we witness his attempt to begin a counter-movement from the right that validates the principles of aristocratic hierarchy and order-of-rank far above modern egalitarian forms. The *Antichrist* contains some of Nietzsche's most controversial political arguments, especially towards the end of the work, in sections immediately following his discussion of the cultural need for priestly exaggerations and deceptions (56-61). These passages offer a glimpse into Nietzsche's counter-politics, and into how he understood the obstacles presented by Christianity.

The final sections of the *Antichrist* are all concerned with the astonishing historical strength of Christianity, and its capacity to wield political power despite the slavish decadence and injustice of its doctrines. In order vividly to portray the injustice that lies at the heart of Christian doctrine, Nietzsche confronts his reader with his positive evaluation of the rigid Hindu caste system codified in the ancient *Lawbook of Manu* (56, 57). Nietzsche praises the stratification of society which the text describes for its life-affirming character and its concordance with the orders of nature. In terms that echo the

social stratification that we see in Plato's *Republic*, Nietzsche declares that every healthy society contains an order of rank such as we see in the *Laws of Manu,* and that at the peak of such orders we find the most spiritual class, made up of individuals who truly appreciate and affirm life (and who sound a lot like Nietzsche in this: "They are the most venerable kind of human being: this does not exclude their being the most cheerful, the most amiable," 57). In this order, everything "Chandala," that bears resentment towards life, is put down and suppressed.[118] Nietzsche's basic point is that, in stark contrast to Christianity, in the *Lawbook of Manu* everything is organized by and for those who

[118] Nietzsche's praise of the Laws of Manu here in the *Antichrist,* and also in *Twilight of the Idols,* is one of the focal points in current debates about the status of Nietzsche's political teaching. Since this is such a massive subject in Nietzsche scholarship today, my remarks here will not do justice to the complexity of the question. As we know, Nietzsche's philosophy has been appropriated by many sectors of the political spectrum over the last century, from the fascist right to the radical left. The legacy of Nietzsche in Germany has resulted, quite understandably, in a scholarly habit of distancing Nietzsche's philosophy from his political claims, or from "the political" altogether. Some commentators, like Thomas Brobjen, argue that Nietzsche was fundamentally uninterested in politics, and, while conceding that Nietzche's thought may have political implications, they tend not to focus on these. Others prefer to "detach" Nietzsche's rich philosophical *oeuvre* from what they consider his distasteful political views. Such readers often come from the postmodern and deconstructivist schools, and tend to celebrate Nietzsche's perspectivalism and 'agonism,' and to put these Nietzschean concepts in the service of radical pluralistic democracy (this outlook originates in Deleuze's reading of Nietzsche). Such thinkers include William Connolly, David Owen, Lawrence Hatab, Dana Villa, and Alan Schrift; see Herbert Siemans and Vasti Roodt's "Introduction" to their large 2008 compilation of recent work on Nietzsche's politics for a thorough discussion of these and other schools. Other commentators are more hesitant to set aside the explicitly political elements of Nietzsche's thought, and, while conceding that culture is primary to politics in Nietzsche's thought, they nonetheless think it valuable to explore the overtly political dimensions of his work head-on. Thinkers in the last group include Bruce Detwiler, Daniel Conway, and Don Dombowsky – and I gravitate towards their explorations of Nietzschean politics. As far as the Laws of Manu go, only Detwiler argues that the Manu-system is one that Nietzsche presents as a straight-forward goal, which he calls "Aristocratic Radicalism" (1990). For reasons that Daniel Conway presents effectively, I think that the emphasis on Aristocratic radicalism (i.e., a legally defined caste system) as a clear-cut goal in Nietzsche is exaggerated. Conway argues that a vision such as Detwiler's abstracts from Nietzsche's awareness of the practical limits to Aristocracy posed by "the depleted vitality he attributes to modernity" (see Conway 1997, 34-39). Though sometimes Conway employs something like the 'separation thesis' (see, for example, 39-42), I think that he captures Nietzsche's position accurately when he writes "Nietzsche does not personally advocate the caste system developed by Manu, but he fully endorses the willed practice of political exclusion, which Manu's system was designed to convey" (36). To the extent that the Laws of Manu represent an ideal, Nietzsche recognizes that it is a far-fetched one, and the main point of his discussion in the *Antichrist* is to demonstrate the superiority of the caste system in justice to Christian-democratic forms (see Conway, 37). We will be looking at the question of Nietzsche's politics again in the next chapter.

represent "happiness, beauty, and benevolence on earth" (57). What is more, Nietzsche emphasizes that the codification undertook to preserve an already-existing flourishing order, rather than imposing it: the laws of Manu are not a radical political document, and one of the reasons for Nietzsche's praise is that, again in opposition to Christianity, the laws of Manu celebrate a historical actuality.

Clearly Nietzsche's praise for the laws of Manu is controversial, and it is tempting to dismiss the passage as merely rhetorical. And yet, while Nietzsche does say explicitly that the passage is intended to "throw a bright light on [the] greatest antithesis of purpose," thus admitting that, with its bright lights, the passage is somewhat rhetorical, he also clearly considers the Hindu system to be superior to the Christian. Whether the Laws of Manu represent an ideal that Nietzsche would advocate for the future is a complicated question, especially given that much of the praise derives from his sense that the codification reflected the natural historical condition of Manu's people. What becomes clearer over the course of the subsequent sections is that Nietzsche does hope to contribute to the establishment of conditions within which such a historical reality might emerge again.

Through the subsequent aphorisms of the *Antichrist,* Nietzsche describes the rise and entrenchment of Christianity in unflattering terms, and in the process calls attention to the surprising successive failures of alternative modes and orders. Beginning with the defeat of the *Imperium Romanum* by Paul, Nietzsche wonders at the power of Christianity. According to him, the Romans were on their way to establishing the foundations of a new, "great culture," which, much like the orders of Manu, "*could take its time*" (58). Nietzsche emphasizes the durability of the Roman foundations ("its structure was calculated to *prove* itself by millennia… the accident of persons must have no effect on such things," 58), and by so doing underscores the incredible character of

Christianity's incursion into the empire. His emphasis on the singular role of Paul highlights the power of Christian doctrine, which, with "the symbol of 'God on the Cross'" represents "the entire heritage of anarchist agitation in the Empire" (58). According to Nietzsche, one shrewd man wielding this symbol conquered all the strength of Rome (on Paul's shrewdness, see 59). In the sections that follow Nietzsche describes the failure of one man (the Holy Roman Emperor Friedrich II) to similarly defeat the papacy through an alliance with Islam (59-60), and the success of one man (Luther) in laying waste to Renaissance through Christianity (the "only great war" to date, 61). The crucial message of these passages is twofold. On the one hand, Nietzsche clarifies his political preferences: against democratizing Christianity, which privileges the resentful many at the expense of the life-affirming strong, Nietzsche clearly prefers hierarchical, Aristocratic orders. On the other hand, Nietzsche offers us a glimpse into the power of Christianity that helps to account for his own inflammatory rhetoric. Nietzsche's anti-Christianity is up against the forces that defeated Rome, Islam, and the Renaissance. And so he too must learn to "write in letters which make even the blind see" (AC 62).

By the time Nietzsche writes *Ecce Homo*, he has already done a lot to establish himself as a world-historical destiny, for he has already written several popularizing works that appeal to modern men's extravagant tastes.[119] The *Antichrist* and *Ecce Homo*

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[119] My interpretation of Nietzsche's own self-understanding in the final period cuts against Conway's reading in *Nietzsche's Dangerous Game* (1997). Conway notices the ways in which Nietzsche's mode in the final period mirrors that of the Christians whom he attacks, but he does not credit Nietzsche with understanding this himself. According to Conway, Nietzsche never overcomes his decadence; *Ecce Homo* is treated as thoroughly ironic, unconscious, and, ultimately, nihilistic. He has little to say about Nietzsche's "great health." The following remark is representative:

> While [Nietzsche] fully intends to reproduce the priestly stratagems of St. Paul and thereby reverse the original revaluation of values, he also reproduces, unintentionally, the priestly affect of his nemesis. *The Antichrist* not only documents the hatred and resentment that motivate the Christian priesthood, but also exemplifies them for all (but Nietzsche) to see. Indeed, if his readers are to endorse his case against the Pauline priests, then they must do so in spite of him, for his otherwise impressive exposé reeks of priestly resentment. (230)

help to clarify the purposes that inform Nietzsche's priestly rhetoric, and the vast scope of his ambitions. They also help to explain Nietzsche's professed love of destiny, or *amor fati,* and to resolve the tension that arises between *amor fati* and the creative will to power. While the phrase *amor fati* seems to bespeak a love of whatever might come to pass, in Nietzsche's mouth it means something else, since his fate is a peculiar one. Far from reflecting a simple acceptance of what may come, Nietzsche's embrace of fate instead represents the active appreciation of what he himself has done with the future through his writings. His creative will to power has done its best to ensure that what necessarily follows of his life – his destiny – is something he can affirm to the fullest. It includes a revaluation of values that he hopes will have cultural and political implications as vast in scope as those of the Christian religion.

Conclusion

When Nietzsche proclaims "I am a *bringer of good tidings* such as there has never been, I know tasks from such a height that any conception of them hitherto has been lacking; only after me is it possible to hope again" (EH IV 1), he makes sure to provide arguments to back up his claim. As the fourth part of *Ecce Homo* discloses, Nietzsche's deeper study of and insight into the 'genealogy of morality,' as compared with Zarathustra, gives him the insight necessary for *amor fati*, for it provides him with insight into the limits and potential of human psychology. He can better love what is necessary – including all that is past – having recognized it as the product of idiosyncratic *will to power* gone astray; the recognition of the source of dominant morality's power also gives him hope regarding his own idiosyncratic destiny, and makes sense of his simultaneous Yes and No-saying, Dionysian character (see III TSZ 6 and 8). Nietzsche can say no the idiosyncratic past

with a light touch free of contempt, while at the same time saying Yes to the future of his own studied creations. In all this he is somewhat removed from the struggle that characterizes Zarathustra. If my reading is correct, the concluding arguments of Part IV also indicate that Nietzsche's insight into priestly rule inspired his employment of a vigorous affecting rhetoric throughout the final period. This suggestion is supported by Nietzsche's arguments about lying and rhetoric found in the *Antichrist*.

Nietzsche's apparent willingness to imitate priestly shrewdness, in the service of his own cultural ends, is, however, in obvious tension with my characterization of the rhetoric of *Ecce Homo* as uniquely honest. Now that we have a better sense of Nietzsche's willingness to lie, do we have to revise the thesis of arresting honesty? If Nietzsche is so willing to dissemble elsewhere, why should we trust that anything he says is meant sincerely, let alone that his outrageous self-presentation is in important ways accurate? Faced with such powerful evidence of Nietzsche's persistent lying, the temptation once again is to resort to postmodern restatements of Nietzsche's boundless subjectivity. Let me conclude this chapter with some remarks aimed at offsetting such a temptation, for I do think that on the whole the bombast of *Ecce Homo* is not affected or put on, but reflects Nietzsche's honest self-assessment, and that he is deliberately presenting this assessment in order to provoke and critique democratic morality.

The first point to reiterate is that my suggestion about the arresting honesty of *Ecce Homo* is not incompatible with the employment of more distortive rhetoric in other works, and even in the pages of *Ecce Homo* itself. While I do think the rhetoric of arresting honesty is Nietzsche's main rhetorical tactic in *Ecce Homo*, it is not necessarily the only one. If the most powerful *pathos* of the work – the bombast – is sincere, it may nonetheless be the case that other "masks" continue to parade about in the background. The "super-affirmative" might be especially suspicious in this regard, insofar as there are

moments in the course of the work when Nietzsche does step back from his most incredible positive claims, acknowledging that he at times struggled with self-affirmation, and was drawn on by external motives. For example, there is evidence in *Ecce Homo* that Nietzsche's "great health," his recovery from décadence, and longstanding contentedness, is not perfect or total, but always in a state of flux. He never fully overcomes the experience of *décadence* and illness: "Convalescence means with me a long, all too long succession of years—it also unfortunately means relapse, deterioration, periods of a kind of *décadence*" (I 1). In Part III, Nietzsche even indicates that the composition of more rhetorical, historical works constitute a falling into relapse. He will describe the period in which he composed *Zarathustra* as a kind of willful fall into a kind of *décadence*, characterized by selflessness induced by his "calling" ("You hear, you don't search; you take, you don't ask who is giving; like a flash of lightning a thought flares up, with necessity, with no hesitation as to its form – I never had any choice"… "a perfect being-outside-yourself" III TSZ 3). He prefigures the period of *Zarathustra* in this passage describing the period of *Human-All-Too-Human*:

> [While writing *Human-All-To-Human*] A downright thirst seized hold of me: thenceforward I pursued in fact nothing other than physiology, medicine and natural science – I returned to actual historical studies only when the *task* imperiously compelled me to. It was then too that I first divined the connection between an activity chosen contrary to one's instincts, a so-called 'calling' to which one is called *least of all* – and that need for the *stupefaction* of the feeling of emptiness and hunger through a narcotic art – for example through Wagnerian art. (III HATH 3)

That Nietzsche is referring to Zarathustra as his return to "historical studies" is confirmed by his description of how he felt after writing *Zarathustra*: "Afterwards I lay ill for a few weeks in Genoa" (III TSZ 4); he speaks of it as an "unparalleled crisis" and refers to the "immense squandering of defensive energies of every *creative* deed" (III TSZ 5). *Beyond Good and Evil* is to Nietzsche a form of convalescence: "All this aids in recuperation:

after all, who could guess just *what* a recuperation is called for by such a squandering of goodness as is Zarathustra?" (III BGE 2). The story of the composition of Zarathustra as something to be overcome reflects the persistence of Nietzsche's experience of décadence, and hence the limits of his own self-sufficient perfection.[120] Though ultimately *Ecce Homo* is, relatively speaking, a remarkably honest work (especially compared to Rousseau's *Confessions*), we must concede that in it Nietzsche does exaggerate his equanimity, perfection, and uniqueness, and seems willing at times to rewrite his life.

But more important than the exceptions to Nietzsche's honesty is his unremitting frankness about the personal character of his "truths." Nietzsche's claims are always tempered by the self-conscious modesty of his epistemology. The persistent modesty of Nietzsche's truth-claims – his insistence on their personal, subjective, and partial character – is a touchstone of his honesty relative to the philosophers and priests of the past. A great latent irony of *Ecce Homo* is that Nietzsche really does consider himself more modest than the authors of the Gospel (see AC 44: "The reality is that here [in the Gospels] the most conscious *arrogance of the elect* is posing as modesty: one has placed *oneself,* the 'community,' the 'good and just,' once and for all on one side, on the side of 'truth' – and the rest, 'the world,' on the other. … *That* has been the most fateful kind of megalomania that has ever existed on earth"). Nietzsche's notoriously circumscribed understanding of truth involves, above all else and in contrast to the priests, a recognition of its complicated character (see AC 14). Nietzsche goes further, and thus discloses his deepest allegiances: far from seeking out disciples, he instead fosters active distrust and skepticism. When, in Part III of *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche praises cynicism as the highest

[120] See Lomax pp. 96-97 for further suggestions about why Nietzsche may have used the super-affirmative and *amor fati* as a kind of mask.

thing attainable on earth, this is just the most explicit proof of his preference for questioning and painful uncertainty over and above passive embrace of even his most enchanting "truths" (see F4, IV 1, TSZ "On the Bestowing Virtue," and AC 54: "One should not let oneself be misled: great intellects are skeptics. Zarathustra is a skeptic"). On the other hand, and somewhat paradoxically, Nietzsche's cynical willingness to imitate Christian fervor throughout his final works is in keeping with the severity of his critique of Christianity, and is a testament to the honesty of that critique.

Finally, the truth and honesty of Nietzsche's self-presentation should be judged against the bar of history. Of course, the history of Nietzsche's influence is hugely controversial, and I cannot rehearse the variety of historical attributions made to his thought here. What I can say is that they vary enormously, and range from scathing arguments about his contributions to the development of 20th Century fascism, and German Nazism in particular, to tributes to him as the father of pluralistic postmodernism; while some blame Nietzsche for the current onslaught of nihilism, and others attack him for mistaken theological claims (is God really so dead after all?), still others credit him with a new kind of philosophical honesty that promises to reintegrate humankind with itself and all earthly things. For his part, Nietzsche anticipates this plurality of responses to his works. While he displays a great deal of confidence in his legacy, he does not speak of it in singularly 'good' terms, but rather, as the famous quote about being dynamite suggests, seems well aware of its potentially dreadful character. In the concluding chapter of *Ecce Homo,* Nietzsche is explicit about the ambivalent character of what lies ahead, but he is altogether confident in his project, and in his role as *the* new standard of man. Far from representing a pitiful, tragic, and morbid individual overcome by decadence, Nietzsche affirms himself totally.

Nietzsche's diagnosis of modern nihilism proves that he does not see himself as the only cause of this impending fatality. And yet, that he so clearly foresees, and never steps away from, his own explosive role in this history is one of the truly sinister and painful parts of coming to terms with Nietzsche. It is impossible not to wonder whether he would stand by his legacy a century later. One thing he would expect from us, I believe, is that we not judge him too lightly (consider, in this vein, how Nietzsche took on Rousseau). We should ask, for example whether Nietzsche took risks that betray a fundamental misunderstanding of human nature – perhaps even a naïve ignorance of man's capacity for systematic cruelty. Does Nietzsche display, in *Ecce Homo* and elsewhere, an excessive hopefulness and trust in the potential character of his impact? Or is it rather the case that his time has (still) not come? All of these important questions will be with us, I imagine, for as long as we study Nietzsche. And, regardless of the correctness of his truths, Nietzsche is an important piece of our collective destiny.

Ecce Homo, a step removed from the grand and tragic seriousness of *Zarathustra*, celebrates Nietzsche' particular excellence, but it also invites a great deal of skepticism, even about his own audacious self-endorsement throughout. Ultimately, however, the real target of Nietzschean cynicism is not Zarathustra or Nietzsche himself, but *décadence* morality and its sources. In the next chapter I take a closer look at what Nietzschean cynicism towards contemporary morality looks like via a discussion of a particularly vehement strain of his critique: the attack on pity. Nietzsche's dissection of what he calls the "modern cult of compassion" involves us in one of the foremost examples of Nietzsche's hyper-charged rhetoric, and affords us the opportunity for a more thorough look at Nietzsche's world-historical employment of the tragic *pathos* as a pedagogical tool of personal transformation. A consideration of the extreme anti-pity arguments in Nietzsche's works also leads to a more subtle consideration of Nietzschean psychology

and the role of will to power in his own thought and life, and his own overcoming of nihilism. It helps us to see more clearly how the super-affirmative (and utterly un-pitiable) Nietzsche of *Ecce Homo* relates to and reinforces the critique of modern morality that so dominates his works.

Chapter 5: Democratic Pity and the Tragic *Pathos*

Ecce Homo is one of Nietzsche's primary literary assaults on ordinary, decent, democratic sentiments. Deliberately provocative and bombastic, he means to present a new "image of man" to counter the influence of Rousseau and his romantic and revolutionary brethren. In stark contrast to the pitiable vulnerability of the bohemian *artistes* and sickly priests, Nietzsche, as an exemplary type, is confident, proud, and strong. He spurns pity, fellow-feeling, and the democratic taste for similarity, and instead embraces the *pathos of distance*, personal pride, and affirmation. As we have seen in previous chapters, however, both philosophers' self-presentations are complicated by rhetorical masks and deliberate irony. Rousseau speaks at length about himself, but in stylized ways that require considerable interpretive effort to understand; he also conceals himself through characters such as the Savoyard Vicar. Nietzsche's self-portrait is complicated by the powerful presence and experiences of Zarathustra. As we saw briefly in the previous chapter, though Zarathustra shares many of Nietzsche's qualities, Zarathustra, unlike the Nietzsche of *Ecce Homo*, suffers dearly, and therefore evokes great pity in the reader. The book is the story of Zarathustra's repeated failing efforts at education, and portrays the suffering he endures in coming to terms with the teaching of the eternal return. Zarathustra's suffering introduces an important puzzle for the student of Nietzsche: what is the difference between the pity we feel for Zarathustra and the pity that Nietzsche decries so vehemently in so many works? In this chapter, I undertake a systematic examination of Nietzsche's critique of pity, with the goal of elucidating the distinction that runs throughout his works between ordinary, democratic pity (which, of course, has not always been 'ordinary') and tragic-aristocratic pity.

Nietzsche's critique of pity has long been the subject of debate between commentators. In 1994, Martha Nussbaum's critical assessment of the critique in an essay entitled "Pity and Mercy: Nietzsche's Stoicism" (in *Nietzsche, Genealogy, Morality*: *Essays on Nietzsche's* Genealogy of Morals, Richard Schacht, ed.) established the terms of a discussion that has continued until recently. In her often-illuminating treatment of Nietzsche's critique of pity and its relationship to stoicism, Nussbaum argues against two groups of earlier interpreters: she critiques those such as Philippa Foot and Jonathan Glover who attribute fascist tendencies to Nietzsche because of his critique of pity (Nussbaum 1994, 139), and others such as Walter Kaufmann who excessively mitigates Nietzsche's critique of pity, rendering him an innocuous quasi-Christian (140). Against the ideas of a ruthless, fascistic Nietzsche, and a soft, sympathetic one, Nussbaum argues that Nietzsche's critique of pity is intended to "bring about a revival of Stoic values of self-command, self-formation within a post-Christian and post-Romantic context (140).

In opposition to Nietzsche's stoicism, Nussbaum argues for what she refers to as the "pro-pity tradition," at the forefront of which she places Aristotle, Homer, and Rousseau. The major distinction Nussbaum articulates in her essay concerns moral responsibility. She suggests that, in the pro-pity tradition, pity is inherently connected to blamelessness or lack of fault, whereas the mercy of the stoics is more representative of a process of blame and subsequent forgiveness. According to Aristotle's famous account of pity in the *Rhetoric*, our experience of pity relies upon the belief that the suffering endured is not the person's fault (Nussbaum 141-2, see *Rhetoric* 1385b13-1386b13 and 1453a4-5). And whereas pity "takes as its focus chance events that virtue does not control," stoic mercy "focuses on fault": it refrains from punishment out of cold paternalistic restraint, not from any acknowledgment of the blamelessness of the sufferer

(148). It is through a critique of this aspect of stoic mercy that Nussbaum targets Nietzsche's understanding of pity. Because Nietzsche fails to grasp that we are unable to control the extent of our suffering, Nussbaum contends, he misunderstands the appropriateness of pity in human life (155-161).

While Nussbaum is right to oppose the fascistic reading of Nietzsche's critique of pity, and the 'soft' reading offered by Kauffman, her treatment of Nietzsche's account of the *pathos* is ultimately inadequate.[121] That Nussbaum attributes the quality of stoical mercy to Nietzsche is strange, for while some element of stoicism is present in Nietzsche, his position is hardly moralistic in the ordinary sense of assigning blame and proffering forgiveness, nor does he reject pity wholesale. Several interpreters of Nietzsche have provided thoughtful replies to Nussbaum, which go far towards restoring the complexity of Nietzsche's perspective. The most important first step in refuting Nussbaum's stoic interpretation is to acknowledge that Nietzsche's critique of contemporary compassion is itself grounded in compassion! As Clifford Orwin notes, Nietzsche's attack on compassion is grounded on a fundamentally humanitarian impulse: Nietzsche is less concerned with assigning blame and moral responsibility than with the threat of the *overall* decay of mankind (2008). Paradoxical though it may seem, Nietzsche critiques human pity in the name of humanity. In this chapter we will get a clear sense of what this means.

Another problem with Nussbaum's account is that she fails to grasp the essential similarity between Nietzsche and the ancients as concerns the *relative* appropriateness of

[121] Most problematic is Nussbaum's assessment of Nietzsche's overall perspective: she unflinchingly accuses him of being fundamentally bourgeois in his experience of life, and hence deaf to the real suffering endured by the physically vulnerable; she then proceeds to argue that Nietzsche's stoic hardness is a sign of weakness rather than strength, and that he is in the end an "armchair philosopher of human riskiness… without inner understanding of the ways in which contingency matters for virtue" (161). All else aside, this seems a bizarre critique to make of a man who participated in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71 and, by all accounts, endured debilitating physical illness throughout most of his adult life.

pity. Nussbaum fails to note the difference in Nietzsche – and, I think, in much ancient thought – between ordinary pity (which he generally critiques) and tragic pity (which he quite often encourages).[122] Other readers of Nietzsche have made headway in explaining this aspect of Nietzsche's actual position more fully. Michael Frazer's "The Compassion of Zarathustra: Nietzsche on Sympathy and Strength" (2006) is a powerful articulation of the subtlety of Nietzsche's critique of pity in light of Zarathustra's compassion. Frazer suggests that there are two kinds of compassion at issue in Nietzsche's corpus: "a compassion of weakness endorsed by slave morality and a compassion of strength embraced by the natural aristocracy" (60). Like Orwin, Frazer notes that, according to Nietzsche, the "deliberate degeneration and atrophy of man" occurring in contemporary Europe, should also, in addition to wrath and horror, provoke compassion itself (69). Frazer goes particularly far in explaining the merits of this higher compassion, and its role in contributing to the higher man's knowledge of human nature (2006, 68-69). He also provides a very clear elucidation of Zarathustra's understanding of compassion (2006, 71-74). Oliver Conolly, in his 1998 article "Pity, Tragedy and the *Pathos* of Distance," approaches the problem of pity in Nietzsche from a different perspective, paying particular attention to the *pathos* of tragedy; he also does an excellent job bringing out the often-overlooked similarities between Nietzsche and Aristotle (see 277-280), and, like Frazer, he attunes us to the significance of these higher passions for education and pedagogy.[123]

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[122] As Clifford Orwin's work on compassion shows, for the ancients compassion is not a virtue: it is a capacity of the soul, and one which Aristotle is quite reluctant to praise (see Orwin 2000 and 2008). That said, Nussbaum is right when she points out that compassion plays an important role in ancient Greek culture – consider the celebrated scene between Achilles and Priam in the *Iliad*. The ancient philosophers' warnings against pity are grounded in a clear understanding of pity's powers.

[123] Michael Ure (2006) makes many interesting comparative points about Nietzsche's rejection of Rousseau and Schopenhauer, but he focuses on *Human All Too Human* to the neglect of Nietzsche's late works and this limits the scope of his analysis of Nietzsche's teaching, and its relevance to our discussion here.

Together Frazer and Conolly draw our attention to richness of Nietzsche's treatment of compassion. As Frazer notes, Zarathustra has tremendous pity, and, as Conolly makes plain, Nietzsche does not leave a vacuum of social sentiment in the aftermath of his critique of pity. Nevertheless, more can be said, and with more precision, about the complex relativity of Nietzsche's understanding of pity. While recognizing ordinary 'weak' and exceptional 'strong' pity in Nietzsche, Frazer does not distinguish clearly enough between the two, and may therefore underestimate the severity of Nietzsche's critique of the former. Connoly missteps in the opposite direction, insofar as he neglects the intimate relationship between the tragic *pathos* and pity, and conflates the tragic *pathos* with the *pathos of distance*; in so doing, he underestimates the uniqueness of the tragic *pathos*, and its significance with respect to Nietzsche's critique of pity. For Nietzsche, pity is a complex human phenomenon that has relative value in a way that is clearly definable. The value of pity itself depends on a series of contingent factors – it is relative, for example, to the object and subject of pity, and to the character of the suffering involved. Nietzsche's critique of pity is also relative in that it is historically situated, and, more specifically, targets a post-Christian audience. Nietzsche's understanding of pity, then, is neither radically relativistic, nor is it conducive to universalizing judgments *à la* Nussbaum.

In what follows, my goal is to refine our understanding of Nietzsche's critique of ordinary pity in order better to situate his implicit endorsement of higher pity. I will begin with a summary of Nietzsche's critique of the former, from the perspectives of morality and politics. Nietzsche's broad picture of pity's role in the evolution of the democratic spirit serves to contextualize his critique of pity, which he emphatically places at the center of his critique of modernity (which emerges most vividly in the later works). Other commentators have provided their own useful summaries of Nietzsche's critique of pity,

and I make reference to some of their arguments, but I try in particular to illustrate the unified character of Nietzsche's critique of pity and its relationship to his broader critique of democracy. In this regard, some of what follows revisits points raised in Chapter 3 concerning Nietzsche's critique of Rousseau. After considering the broad context of Nietzsche's critique, I turn to its core, which concerns the impact of democratic pity on the fundamental drive of the spirit, or will to power. As Frazer notes, "it is the compassion in the individual that feeds the degeneracy in the collective" (63). I undertake to examine this process at its source. It is by understanding the psychological structure of democratic pity that we can see its ultimate danger, in addition to how it differs from tragic pity. In the second part of this chapter I turn my attention to tragic pity and its functions in the soul. I argue that the subject, object, and psychological structure of tragic pity differ from those of ordinary pity in crucial ways.

Rousseau makes every effort to eradicate elevated tragic pity, in keeping with his 'romantic' striving on behalf of sentiment, democracy, and equality. At the same time, he quietly fostered something akin to Nietzsche's *pathos of distance* as something that should remain active in private life. As I hope to show, Nietzsche's works - and especially the rhetorically charged final works – represent an effort to destabilize the dominant public culture of pity, in part by restoring a public recognition of the tragic (which is in some ways an inherently private, or rare, affair), in addition to making public the *pathos of distance* which Rousseau deliberately drove underground. In this way, Nietzsche hopes to revive modern man's will to power. Such a revival has complex political implications that I take up by way of conclusion.

I. Nietzsche's Critique of Democratic Pity

In a rich passage from the Preface to the *Genealogy of Morality*, Nietzsche indicates just how far-reaching the problem of compassion is:

> This problem of the *value* of pity and of the morality of pity (– I am opposed to the pernicious modern effeminacy of feeling –) seems at first to be merely something detached, an isolated question mark; but whoever sticks with it and *learns* how to ask questions here will experience what I experienced – a tremendous new prospect opens up for him, a new possibility comes over him like a vertigo, every kind of mistrust, suspicion, fear leaps up, his belief in morality, in all morality, falters – finally a *new demand* becomes audible. Let us articulate this new demand: we need a *critique* of moral values, *the value of these values themselves must first be called in question*. (Section 6)

Insofar as pity constitutes the cornerstone of modern morality, its potential displacement as a supreme value will have a powerful impact on contemporary culture. The questioning of pity, Nietzsche warns us, leads to a tremendous but terrifying apprehension regarding the character of morality as such. The essence of this critique is well-known. It is that modern morality favors the weak many to the detriment of the few strong; modern standards of judgment are shaped almost exclusively by this unhealthy preference. Nietzsche's critique of pity is best understood in conjunction with this broader treatment of the evolution of the democratic spirit (and as such involves excursions into numerous discussions across various works).[124]

Compassion is, by definition, connected to suffering, and in Nietzsche's thought this means it tends to be connected to slave morality. To experience life *primarily* as suffering is, according to Nietzsche, to experience life from the perspective of the inherently weak and slavish; to consider compassion, which indulges this suffering, to be a great good is therefore to participate in a slavish mode of moral evaluation. We see this argument unfold through Nietzsche's genealogical account of morality, which is found in the *Genealogy* and in Part Five of *Beyond Good and Evil*. According to the argument of

[124] For other summaries of Nietzsche's critique of pity, see Nussbaum (1994, 150-154), Conolly (1998, 280-284), Weber (2004, 501-507), and Frazer (2006, 60-63).

these works, the "pitiable" are originally and exclusively made up of "slave types"—that is to say, of the "low, low-minded, common and plebeian" (GM 1.2), and of the "violated, oppressed, suffering, unfree, who are uncertain of themselves and weary" (BGE §260). Slave morality, Nietzsche suggests, grows out of the valuations of the physically weak and oppressed and is defined in reactive, negative terms. Lacking their own positive reasons for life, the weak live in reaction to the power (and brutality) of the strong. Painfully aware of their inferiority, the weak and impotent "compensate themselves with an imaginary revenge" through the inversion of master-values, and the invention of "evil" (GM 1.10). The strong are deemed evil, and they are blamed for the plights of the weak. Only in a reactionary way do the slave-types designate themselves as good, since they suppose that the good must be the opposite of evil. Nietzsche explains how weakness "lies itself into something meritorious," makes misery into a form of "schooling" or "testing," and eventually into a new ideal type, deserving of diverse compensations, including divine salvation (GM 1.14). The grounds for goodness in slave morality are hollow, for at the core of the slave perspective there is only suffering and weariness of life. Compassion as a *value* has the same origin as that of "the good" as it emerges within slave-morality: both are constituted by the fundamentally negative experience of suffering. As Nietzsche indicates in works that span his middle and late periods, the essential nature of pity is harmful, since "[pity] increases the amount of suffering in the world" (*Daybreak*, II, §134), and "suffering itself becomes contagious through pity" (*Antichrist,* Section 7). Nietzsche will not let us forget the essential relationship that exists between pity and suffering.

It is only through a reversal of values, then, that pity gains positive meaning. It also has a particular usefulness within slave morality, for it makes suffering social, and can therefore be used as a social tool of the weak against the strong. Indeed, that in late

modernity pity is typically taken to be a virtue is an indication that the herd has succeeded in taming and "instrumentalizing" the stronger types. In this sense, Nietzsche's critique of pity is bound up with his critique of utilitarianism. Nietzsche explains the utilitarian revaluation exacted by slave morality as follows:

> Those qualities are brought out [by the slave] and flooded with light which serve to ease existence for those who suffer: here pity, the complaisant and obliging hand, the warm heart, patience, industry, humility and friendliness are honored – for here these are the most useful qualities and almost the only means for enduring the pressure of existence. Slave morality is essentially a morality of utility. (BGE §260)

Nietzsche ultimately attributes the discovery of pity's utility not to the weak themselves, but to the weakest among the strong – to the priests. According to Nietzsche's account of the generation of modern morality, the priestly types are responsible for the long preservation of the weak. They manifest a "*protective instinct of a degenerating life* which tries by all means to sustain itself and to fight for its existence;" Nietzsche continues: "the ascetic priest, this apparent enemy of life, this *denier* – precisely he is among the greatest *conserving* and yes-creating forces of life" (GM 3.13). The priest becomes a conserving and "yes-creating" force because he is able to provide various creative forms of anesthetics and consolations for misery and suffering, and thus to encourage the weak to continue living (see GM 3.17-18). But his most powerful and dangerous tool involves pity, for pity undermines the confidence of the strong. Speaking in hypothetical terms, he explains how degenerating life might ensnare the mighty:

> Undoubtedly if they succeeded in poisoning the consciences of the fortunate with their own misery, with all misery, so that one day the fortunate began to be ashamed of their good fortune and perhaps said to one another: "it is disgraceful to be fortunate: there is too much misery!"
>
> But no greater or more calamitous misunderstanding is possible than for the happy, well-constituted, powerful in soul and body to begin to doubt their right to happiness in this fashion. Away with this "inverted world"! (GM 3.14)

By way of compassion, the priests are able to persuade the strong to doubt their right to happiness, and eventually even to feel guilty and responsible for the plights of the weak (see GM 1.13, EH, *Daybreak* 2). Whereas Nietzschean morality at its most extreme insists that "The higher *ought* not to degrade itself to the status of an instrument of the lower, the *pathos* of distance *ought* to keep their tasks eternally separate!" (GM 3.14.), ordinary pity puts the strong in the service of the weak, whose utilitarianism gradually begins to dominate. A key part of Nietzsche's critique of pity is that it instrumentalizes the strong.

In becoming instruments of the low, the strong end up in the service of ends that are base and stagnant—that is to say, ends that primarily involve basic physical comfort. A further aspect of Nietzsche's critique of ordinary pity is that its ends are basely hedonistic, grounded on pleasures derived negatively through the alleviation of pain and suffering. This pessimistic outlook is characteristic of the weak and sees the basic physicality of life as fundamentally painful. Christianity's lessons of shame regarding the body ultimately serve further to undermine the instincts of genuine health (cf. GM 2.7), adding shame of the body to its basic painfulness. Nietzsche describes the danger posed by such a perspective in aphorism 225 of *Beyond Good and Evil*. Speaking to contemporary moralizers, he says:

> You want, if possible – and there is no more insane "if possible" – to abolish suffering. And we? It really seems that we would rather have it higher and worse than ever. Well-being as you understand it – that is no goal, that seems to us an end, a state that soon makes man ridiculous and contemptible – that makes his destruction desirable. […]
>
> In man creature and creator are united: in man there is material, fragment, excess, clay, dirt, nonsense, chaos; but in man there is also creator, form-giver, hammer, hardness, spectator divinity, and the seventh day: do you understand this contrast? And that your pity is for the "creature in man," for what must be formed, broken, forged, torn, burnt, made incandescent, and purified—that which necessarily must and should suffer?

The ordinary pity that Nietzsche attacks is concerned overwhelmingly with the mere "creature" in man, and it serves the desires for consolatory comforts and the abolition of misery and shame. Though Nietzsche is no enemy of the body as such, he nevertheless considers excessive concern for physical well-being to be a sign of weakness and decadence (see Nussbaum, 149-150). The passage also points to the connection between pessimism and hedonism. The culture of pity trades on basic pleasures and pains, but is contains secret self-contempt, and is cynical about the ultimate value of life (on this theme, see BGE §222, EH, *Wise* 4, Z "Prologue"). Its "idealism," like that of Nietzsche's Rousseau, is tied to the preservation of a group that suffers from self-contempt, and thus is not very ideal at all.

A related paradox involving ordinary pity concerns its hypocritical mixture of kindness and cruelty. In several places, Nietzsche acknowledges that pity can be pleasurable, but ordinary pity tends to be self-deceived about this fact. Nietzsche first considers this problem with pity in *Daybreak*. There, Nietzsche explores the differences between pity and suffering, and the shame involved in suffering and being pitied, as opposed to the pleasure and superiority induced by pitying. He explains the differences at some length in aphorism 133, showing that the suffering of the pitier (*mitleid,* "suffering with") is different from that of the sufferer in that it involves the recognition of one's contrasting circumstance, and the pleasurable feeling of being able to help. In aphorism 135, Nietzsche suggests that among savage peoples, being pitied is considered the greatest ignominy, for it is recognized as a sign of contempt; only the contemptible would allow themselves to be pitied, and the higher types would even honor one another by withholding pity. A reason for such disdain of pity is given in aphorism 138: "even in the most favorable case, there is something degrading in suffering and something elevating and productive of superiority in pitying – which separates these two sensations from one

another to all eternity." Though Nietzsche suggests that for the "savages" witnessing suffering was not enjoyable since pity and suffering were closely tied to contempt (§135 and §134), in modern society this "savage" standard has shifted considerably, and men have come to enjoy pitying in all its forms.[125] Perhaps Nietzsche's most shocking description of this phenomenon occurs in the first essay of the *Genealogy*, where Nietzsche quotes statements by Aquinas and Tertullian regarding the delights received by the holy in witnessing the sufferings of the damned (Section 15; the passage from Tertullian makes the point and then some). In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* such thoughts find expression in the following condensed statement:

> More than anything on earth [man] enjoys tragedies, bullfights, and cruxifictions; and when he invented Hell for himself, behold it was his heaven on earth./When the great man cries out, straightway the little man comes running; his tongue is hanging from his mouth with lasciviousness. He, however, calls it his "pity."/The little man, especially the poet—how zealously he accuses life in words! Listen to it, but do not overlook the sensual pleasure that is in this complaint and accusation!" ("The Convalescent")

As we saw in our discussion of Zarathustra's suffering in the previous chapter, and as will see in the discussion of tragic pity to follow, Nietzsche does not condemn such pleasures altogether. What he is repulsed by is the hypocrisy of contemporary pitiers, who, unlike Zarathustra (see *Of the Compassionate*) have no shame in their pity, and consider their cruel lasciviousness to be deep kindness and even virtue. For Nietzsche such an outlook on the part of the low is also often rooted in a spirit of revenge, such as is represented by the priests (see Nussbaum, 154; GM III.14). In its claim to moral virtue, then, such a position deeply deceives itself.

Nietzsche is adamant not only that modern society was shaped by this lascivious form of pity, but also that the morality of pity continues to dominate in his day.

[125] So, whereas the savages felt superiority in pity, they did not enjoy it. Nietzsche's point seems to be that for all of their alleged barbarism, savage men were more humane in their unwillingness to cruelly enjoy the suffering of others that pity involves.

According to Nietzsche's abstract account of the development of this morality (in the *Genealogy* and *Beyond Good and Evil*), contemporary society is the product of the indiscriminate "mixing of classes and races" effected by the priestly caste, whose primary tool was compassion; the result of this transformation is an "enchanting and mad *semi-barbarism*" (see BGE §200, §224 and GM 3.14). As his choice of the word "enchanting" indicates, Nietzsche is far from thinking that this mingling of classes and races is simply bad. Though most "semi-barbarians" will be weak-willed, such intermingled societies are also the source of the rarest and highest of men (see BGE §200). And though he does not make it so explicit in the final period, Nietzsche is clear elsewhere that pity has also contributed to a deepening of the soul. In *Daybreak*, for example, Nietzsche describes the development of empathy and its connection to the development of intelligence as follows:

> The capacity for understanding […] declines in proud, arrogant men and peoples, because they have less fear: on the other hand, every kind of understanding and self-dissembling is at home among timid peoples; here is also the rightful home of the imitative arts and of the higher intelligence. (§142)

Because weaker castes lack physical strength, they take recourse in subtler forms of power – "of the imitative arts and the higher intelligence" – such that the mixing of the classes also means a mingling and diversification in forms of expression and understanding.

Though the mixing effectuated by the priests has augmented the human psyche in innumerable ways, on the whole, it has nonetheless led to weaker human beings. As Nietzsche suggests in *Daybreak,* the reigning morality today contains echoes of Christianity, now uttered in softened French tones: *"On n'est bon que par la pitié: il faut donc qu'il y ait quelque pitié dans tous nos sentiments"* ("We are good only through pity: therefore, in all of our sentiments there must be some pity"; Nietzsche quotes Joseph Joubert, a late contemporary of Rousseau's, §132, see also BGE §202, 222). This

morality tends to act in the service of the low and slavish, or, as Nietzsche so shockingly puts it in the *Antichrist*, to preserve "what is ripe for destruction" and to defend "those who have been disinherited and condemned by life" (AC 7). What is most important to Nietzsche's overall critique of pity, however, is not that it preserves the weak, but rather that in its dominating contemporary form it has come to threaten the very possibility of strength. As one commentator argues, the morality of pity becomes a real problem only when it begins to endanger other, higher, moral perspectives and types: "the real danger that Nietzsche points out is […] a *cult* of compassion, according to which pity comes to be seen as the sole value, the virtue from which all others are derived" (Weber 2004, 507). The danger that pity poses thus lies in its connection to the democratic dogmatism and universalism discussed in Chapter 3.

It is not pity as such, then, but the dominance of pity that ultimately leads to wholesale human decline, for it brings the healthier moral compass of the strong to ruin. Nietzsche insists that democratic morality – in its simple yet paradoxical indulgence of pity and obsession with suffering – has a core of tyrannical intolerance. He remarks in this vein:

> [Morality in Europe today] is only *one* kind of human morality beside which, before which, after which many other, above all *higher,* moralities are possible or ought to be possible. But against such a 'possibility,' against such an 'ought,' this morality defends itself with all its might: it says, obstinately and stubbornly, 'I am morality itself, and nothing is morality besides me!' (BGE §202)

Contemporary morality threatens the very possibility of a morality of strength; as such, it threatens the very core of existence. As he says of the strong higher types in the *Genealogy*: "Their right to exist, the privilege of the full-toned bell over the false and cracked, is a thousand times greater: they alone are our *warranty* for the future, they alone are *liable* for the future of man" (GM III.14). Though much could be said about the

role of the higher types in Nietzschean philosophy, for now it suffices to note that their power and strength springs forth from authentic sources of well-being rooted in positive experience. As democratic morality gains ascendance, it undercuts the confidence of the healthy, and leads them to compassionate devotion to the sickly. As we have already seen, Nietzsche insists that such instrumentality is not the proper task of the strong; in the *Genealogy* he adds emphatically that "precisely this matter requires *profound* apprehension and comprehension" (GM III.15). His concern seems to be that when the fundamentally healthy lose themselves in service to others, they leave the realms of genuine human meaning deserted. Ordinary pity, because of its universal leveling power, threatens to drain life of its actual meaning and value.

Nietzsche's worry about the ultimate loss of meaning in the face of contemporary morality perhaps seems excessive, but it is clear that he understands it to be grounded on an important claim about finitude and the fundamental character of existence that contrasts with the strange 'idealism' of the sufferers. In aphorism 259 of *Beyond Good and Evil*, and in keeping with his general theory of will to power, Nietzsche provides a succinct description of the hard economy that shapes existence:

> Here we must beware of superficiality and get to the bottom of the matter, resisting all sentimental weakness: life itself is essentially appropriation, injury, overpowering what is alien and weaker; suppression, hardness, imposition of one's own forms, incorporation and at least, at its mildest, exploitation.

If resources were unlimited, or if there were still meaning in the idea of an afterlife, it is perhaps conceivable that the strong would have less need to guard their energies for themselves and their tasks, and could therefore devote themselves to palliating the suffering of the weak. For Nietzsche, however, the idea of ending suffering is at bottom "insane," given the true character of the world. To seek an end to suffering is a life-

denying goal with no end, for suffering is a necessary condition of life itself. Nevertheless, according to him, such a desire dominates modern peoples:

> There is no point on which the ordinary consciousness of Europeans resists instruction as on this: everywhere people are now raving, even under scientific disguises, about coming conditions of society in which "the exploitative aspect" will be removed – which sounds to me as if they promised to invent a way of life that would dispense with all organic functions. "Exploitation" does not belong to a corrupt or imperfect and primitive society; it belongs to the essence of what lives, as a basic organic function; it is a consequence of the will to power, which is after all the will of life. (§259)

In Nietzsche's view, the desire to end suffering is "a will to the *denial* of life, a principle of disintegration and decay" (BGE §259). To the extent that ordinary pity is connected to this desire to end suffering, it is mistaken, all the way down, in its understanding of life. Not only are the pitiers deceived; their goals are profoundly erroneous.

A closer look at Nietzsche's theory of the will to power can help us to gain a better understanding of just how deeply the mistakes of the idealists reach into the modern psyche. Nietzsche's theory, which emerges most fully over the pages of *Thus Spoke Zarathusra* and *Beyond Good and Evil*, is the cornerstone of his philosophy, and an extensive treatment of it is beyond the scope of my discussion here.[126] That said, whatever the status of the theory as an explanation of the world as a whole (see BGE §36), the theory of will to power is also presented as a serious explanation both of changing social dynamics and of motion within the individual psyche. Often Nietzsche analogizes between the social and the individual (see, for example, BGE, §19, 260); we have already glimpsed Nietzsche's account of the basic social tension between masters and slaves, and the role that pity plays in their eventual mixing. It is possible to see pity's corresponding effect within the individual.

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[126] Some of the most important discussions in Nietzsche of the will to power, and on willing itself, occur in *Zarathustra,* Part I, "1001 Goals"; Part 2, "Self-Overcoming" and "Redemption," BGE §1, 19, 36, and TI VI 3. Heidegger's work on Nietzsche offers the most thorough treatment of the meaning of the will to power in his thought.

According to Nietzsche, the individual soul, like the social body, is composed of a diversity of desires and drives that are often in great tension and even "harsh juxtaposition" (§260). Nietzsche contends that the soul is composed of a complex of disparate drives and desires, or, rather, that "body is only a social structure composed of many souls," that compete with one another for dominance in relationships that spur on all life and development (BGE §23, §36). He stresses the complex nature of willing—"willing seems to be above all something *complicated*, something that is a unity only in a word" (§19, cf. also §13, §18, and §36)—and indicates that, as in his account of the social organism, it involves an interplay of commanding and obedient elements.

The main ingredients of willing, Nietzsche explains, are sensations and feelings, thinking ("in every act of will there is a commanding thought"), an emotion of command, and the pleasant sensation of successful obedience (§19). In democratic times, partly because of the confused "mingling of races," the soul tends to become exhausted, and to seek comfort and tranquility above all else:

> The man of an era of dissolution which mixes the races together and who therefore contains within him the inheritance of a diversified descent, that is to say contrary and often not merely contrary drives and values which struggle with one another and rarely leave one another in peace—such a man of late cultures and broken lights will, on average, be a rather weak man: his fundamental desire is that the war which he is should come to an end; happiness appears to him, in a accord with a sedative (for example Epicurean or Christian) medicine and mode of thought, preeminently as the happiness of repose, of tranquility, of satiety, of unity at last attained, as a 'Sabbath of Sabbaths,' to quote the holy rhetorician Augustine, who was himself such a man. – (§200)

Modern man, like modern society, is a particularly mixed-up, chaos-ridden creature, and his willfulness in any one direction often degenerates as result of his internal confusion. Thoughts and sentiments that help to calm his fraught soul without unduly upsetting any particular drive are especially likely to thrive in such circumstances.

Just as the pity promoted by the priests on the part of the high for the low puts the strong in the service of the low, in the soul, too, it is generally a dissipating force. According to Nietzsche, modern moralities have become "moralities of timidity"; they "are but prescriptions for behavior in relation to the degree of *perilousness* in which the individual person lives with himself; [they are] recipes to counter his passions, his good and bad inclinations insofar as they have will to power in them and would like to play the tyrant" (§198). In society, the promotion of pity diminishes and diverts the dangerous elements of society; in the soul, it thwarts the power of the dangerous but most promising passions. When the various drives of the soul confront each other, and the main goal is comfort, the higher drives will lose out:

> Pity stands in antithesis to the tonic emotions which enhance the energy of the feeling of life: it has a depressive effect. One loses force when one pities. […] through the abundance of the ill-constituted of all kinds which it retains in life it gives life itself a gloomy and questionable aspect. (AC, section 7)

So long as pity for the 'under-wills' and lesser drives defuse the tensions of the soul, the higher, life-promoting drives will suffer. Ordinary pity – because it inevitably interferes with and diminishes painful but fruitful tensions in the soul – inhibits the kind of gathering-of-strength and decisiveness that is necessary for integrated spiritual command and growth. It strikes at the heart of will to power.

Nietzsche's account of ordinary pity and its effects takes the form of a relentless attack that corresponds devastatingly to his broader critique of contemporary democratic culture: he understands pity to be linked at its origins to those who experience life as weakness and mere suffering; it is used as a tool to preserve the unhealthy, and helps to usher in utilitarian morality; it is inextricably hedonistic and concerned with "the creature" in man (and thus seduces to a misbegotten form of hedonistic "idealism"); despite its humanitarian pretensions, it betrays a secret self-contempt; when it becomes

dominant, its universalism threatens the very existence of higher moralities, higher types, and higher drives in the soul; it thus threatens the core of life. What is worse, Nietzsche is unequivocal that pity has become the dominant moral drive, at least in the Europe of his day (BGE §201, §202). Nietzsche's attack of pity proves to be consistent with the rest of his critique of modern democracy, and to play a central role within that broader critique. The critique is profoundly disturbing insofar as it unearths the hollowness of contemporary morality and portends the continued decline of humanity.

Nietzsche seems determined to have his reader confront pity and its dangers, insofar as the theme of pity is so prominent in so many of his works. He also proves well aware of the frightening cumulative power of his attack. This affective aspect of Nietzsche's critique is especially clear in passages where Nietzsche introduces the gravest possible danger associated with pity in the soul – the danger of nihilism.

Nihilism is a great theme in Nietzsche, and is typically related in his works to the death of God and the loss of old ideals. It can be associated with loss of selfhood, displacement, and lack of power.[127] In a well-known passage from the *Genealogy,* we learn of the connection between nihilism, pity, and nausea:

> Broadly speaking, it is not fear of man that we should desire to see diminished; for this fear compels the strong to be strong, and occasionally terrible—it maintains the well-constituted type of man. What is to be feared, what has a more a more calamitous effect than any other calamity, is that man should inspire not profound fear, but profound nausea; also not great fear but great pity. Suppose these two were one day to unite, they would inevitably beget one of the uncanniest monsters: the "last will" of man, his will to nothingness, nihilism. And indeed a great deal points toward this union… [GM 3.14]

Profound nausea for man combined with great pity is a recipe for nihilism – such a combination signals a dangerous glut of seemingly meaningless misery and suffering. It is very much related to the loss of God, insofar as it is a danger that man encounters in

[127] See *Nietzsche, Nihilism, and the Philosophy of the Future* (2009) for a series of essays that treat the problem of nihilism in Nietzsche.

trying to accept the world without the support of the old gods and ideals.[128] The greatest danger that Nietzsche foresees is the distinctly untragic combination of great nausea and pity at mankind's lowness and suffering.[129] Though we learn in *BGE* that nausea is a common sentiment among sensitive noble types (cf., §203, §224, §270, and §282), in the passage from the *Genealogy* we see that the cumulative effect of this heightened feeling of disgust with life, combined with pity, is nihilism and hopelessness regarding all positive values. It threatens to undo the will in a flood of pity.

What is perhaps the most interesting feature of the passage from the *Genealogy*, however, is that Nietzsche contrasts pity, nausea, and nihilism with fear. Nietzsche appeals to fear in three important ways in the course of this dense passage. He first suggests that it is a healthy tonic emotion that "compels the strong to be strong and occasionally terrible – it *maintains* the well-constituted type of man"; second, he contrasts it explicitly with both pity and nausea, suggesting that it is preferable to both; and lastly, he claims that what is to be feared as most calamitous is the nihilistic combination of pity and nausea. Implicit here is also the suggestion that fear of nihilism, and of the pity and nausea that contribute to it, might be used as a weapon to combat nihilism. With this, Nietzsche provides us with a clue regarding his rhetorical strategy. Through the cumulative impact of the critique of pity and its danger, Nietzsche seems to

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[128] As we saw in Chapter 4, Zarathustra confronts this problem dramatically in "The Convalescent," where he suffers from his "great disgust at man" and suffers through the prophet's thought that "it is all one, nothing is worthwhile, knowledge chokes" (see also "The Prophet" and "The Cry of Distress"). In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, it is a problem that is also part and parcel of the problem of the eternal return (which demands the perpetual embrace of life in all its forms). It makes the eternal return at once needful and very difficult. The theme of nausea is also present in *Ecce Homo*.

[129] Many commentators have commented on the ugly resentful character of this nausea. We should note that Nietzsche presents it as a danger that needs to be overcome. He emphasizes the overwhelming extent of suffering, and magnitude of decrepitude in the world, and is in a sense very humane. Nausea seems like a natural response to the worst calamities of life, including widespread poverty and disease (see *Daybreak* 134, "He who for a period of time made the experiment of intentionally pursuing occasions for pity in his everyday life and set before his soul all the misery available to him in his surroundings would inevitably grow sick and melancholic").

want to bring his reader to the brink of nihilistic pity and nausea. At the same time, however, and via the same account, he also cultivates a deep fear. Thus, his critique is ultimately crafted not to elicit nihilism, but rather fear of nihilism. In what follows I argue, more specifically, that Nietzsche is predominantly concerned with cultivating fear and pity – that is, tragic pity – for what is high. Nietzsche's critique of pity should be understood as part of his larger philosophical drama. It is partly his willingness to indulge in dramatic exploits of this kind that sets him apart from the quiet, private stoics (see BGE 9, 227), and shows how far he is willing to go to upset contemporary prejudices.

II. Tragic Pity and the *Pathos* of Philosophy

"Pity for all" – would be hardness and tyranny toward you, my dear neighbor! (BGE 82)

By locating Nietzsche's critique of ordinary pity within his broader critique of democratic modernity, we grasp its overarching rhetorical significance more clearly. Nietzsche's vehement description of the dangers of contemporary morality, with its core of compassion, serves to foster fear and dread regarding the future of man, and pity for the victims of modernity's particular pathologies. Paradoxically, his negative assessment of ordinary pity awakens a tragic foreboding for what is higher in man, which suggests that in the great drama of Nietzschean thought, something like 'tragic pity' is preserved and cultivated. This should not be surprising, for, if Nietzsche is known for his critique of pity, he is even more famous for being a philosopher of tragedy – he is the author of *The Birth of Tragedy* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, "disciple of the philosopher Dionysus" (EH Preface, 2) and "first *tragic philosopher*" (EH, BT 3). Just as the critique of pity needs to be understood in light of the critique of modern democratic morality, tragic pity should be considered in the context of this other great Nietzschean theme.

The theme of tragedy, as seen in Chapter 4, goes back to the *Birth of Tragedy* and is pervasive in Nietzschean thought. This overarching interest in and concern with tragedy, I argue, consistently colors his treatment of pity. Even during the middle period, where Nietzsche is arguably the most critical of ordinary pity and least concerned with art and literature, he is ever-careful to distinguish between various forms of pity and emphasizes its complex character.[130] In the later works, he develops a more uniform and dualistic distinction between ordinary and tragic pity. He explicitly refers to this distinction in aphorism 225 of *Beyond Good and Evil* (an aphorism that is therefore of particular importance for our discussion). Speaking in "Our Virtues," to the "good" Europeans of today (see §218) on behalf of "We Europeans of the day after tomorrow" (see §214), Nietzsche says:

> Our pity is a higher and more farsighted pity: we see how man makes himself smaller, how you make him smaller – and there are moments when we behold your pity with indescribable anxiety, when we resist this pity – when we find your seriousness more dangerous than any piece of frivolity. (§225)

From Nietzsche's perspective, the seriousness of ordinary morality is cause for great fear and anxiety, for it threatens to lead to man's diminishment. Nietzschean pity, on the other hand, promises to serve man's long-term enhancement. To clarify the distinct character of the second kind of pity, I begin by comparing it to ordinary pity. Not one of the critiques outlined above applies to "tragic pity," and understanding the specific ways in which Nietzschean pity differs from ordinary pity enables an evaluation of the positive role of pity and the tragic experience in Nietzsche's thought.

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[130] In *Daybreak*, for example, he refers to a "more manly brother of pity," which he attributes to the ancients and associates with indignation at another's blameless unhappiness (§78); he goes on at length about the complicated character of pitying, afterward declaring, "all of this, and other, much more subtle things in addition, constitute 'pity': how coarsely does language assault with its one word so polyphonous a being! (§133).

Nietzsche's revaluation of tragic pity involves, first of all, a transformed understanding of its primary object. Like ordinary pity, it is concerned in significant ways with sympathy and pain, but, while ordinary pity is for those who are essentially weak and suffer from life, the pity that Nietzsche employs and condones is concerned with higher types and humanity at large. In his mind, the worthy recipients of pity today are the rare and 'well-turned-out,' and mankind as a whole insofar as it is diminished by want of greatness (it is thus 'higher' and 'more far-sighted,' §225). Nietzsche is, then, not just a critic of ordinary lamenting, but also the willing author of a new kind of lament. The following excerpt from aphorism 203 of *Beyond Good and Evil* provides us with a clear example of this Nietzschean trope. It is especially provocative insofar as it makes its appeal on multiple levels:

> There are few more grievous pains than once to have beheld, divined, sensed, how an extraordinary man missed his way and degenerated: but he who has the rare eye for the collective danger that 'man' himself may degenerate, he who, like us, has recognized the tremendous fortuitousness which has hitherto played its game with the future of man […]: he suffers from a feeling of anxiety with which no other can be compared—for he comprehends in a single glance that which, given a favorable accumulation and intensification of forces and tasks, could be cultivated out of man, he knows with all the knowledge of his conscience how the greatest possibilities in man are still unexhausted and how often before the type man has been faced with strange decisions and new paths—he knows even better from his most painful memories against what wretched things an evolving being of the highest rank has hitherto usually been shattered and has broken off, sunk and has itself become wretched. (BGE §203)

Here Nietzsche not only explains the endangerment of the higher types, but also offers a personal glimpse of the pain experienced by one who recognizes the typical plights of higher men and the implications of this phenomenon for mankind. Such thoughts form a refrain in Nietzsche's later works.[131] His message in such instances is complex, for he at

[131] This passage echoes the poignant chapter "The Tree on the Mountain" in Part I of *Zarathustra*, and the whole of Part IV (which deals with Zarathustra's 'pity for the higher men'). It also foreshadows other passages from *Beyond Good and Evil*. In the very next aphorism, for example, which opens Part 6, Nietzsche laments the pitiful condition of modern philosophy (BGE §204), and in "What is Noble" Nietzsche elaborates extensively and movingly on the perpetual vulnerability of what is rare (see §268-270,

once offers a multilayered warning and an object of hope. Like ordinary pity, Nietzsche's is dangerous sympathy, and a dangerous truth – the strong are already in great danger, and those who recognize the danger are thereby further imperiled – but Nietzschean pity is distinguished from the outset by its higher object. The 'extraordinary man' is worthy of pity because he has inherent positive potential and represents a promising goal for humanity. Unlike ordinary pity, which serves those who do not adequately appreciate life, Nietzschean pity promises new heroes and philosophers (see Z I.8, I.15 and BGE §203, §210-213, and §295).

Tragic pity also differs from ordinary pity in that it involves a greater parity of subject and object. Whereas ordinary pity, as described by Nietzsche, is so problematic because it facilitates the instrumentalization of the high by the low (and the rise of the utilitarian perspective), in its simplest form, tragic pity is experienced by the high for the high. This is not to say that tragic pity is restricted to a certain distinct class of people, for, as we have seen, modern society is characterized by its lack of distinct class divisions. Rather, it is an experience of sympathy for some higher aspect of human nature, and this presupposes some shared experience between pitier and pitied. Thus, it may be possible for a relatively low type to have pity for a higher man whose suffering would speak to an atypical streak of elevated sensitivity within him. The Nietzschean experience of pity is arguably designed to draw out and encourage these higher qualities – to act, perhaps, as a "divining rod for every grain of gold that has long lain buried in the dungeon of much mud and sand" (BGE §295). Even so, in its abstract form, tragic pity is exclusive and selective, and, because it has this higher character, it does not threaten the subordination and ruin of the higher types. On the contrary, whereas 'slave' types

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§276 and §284). There again he highlights the pain of the one who comes to understand this vulnerability of the "exquisite cases," warning that with such understanding one "might suffocate from pity" (§269).

actively seek to pity and be pitied, such that the socio-political, or public, dimension of ordinary pity is naturally expansive, the proud character of the tragic types means that their suffering will typically be deeply personal and private. The noble type hesitates to acknowledge the equality of anyone (BGE §265), and Nietzsche indicates that the noble type of man will resist the pity of his inferiors. He is likely to experience "spiritual haughtiness" (as well as nausea) with respect to his observers, and may find "all kinds of disguises necessary to protect [himself] against contact with obtrusive and pitying hands and altogether against everything that is not [his] equal in suffering" (BGE §270). While weak and slavish sorts welcome the pity of the strong, the strong guard their pain and try to maintain the *pathos of distance*.

This simultaneous pride and hiddenness reflects a greater awareness on the part of the stronger types, and provides several points of contrast with the self-deceived common pitiers. First, the hiddenness of tragic pity points to a self-consciousness regarding both the essentially negative character of suffering; the high are ashamed of their suffering, and do not want to harm others with the sight of it (see *Zarathustra* "On the Compassionate" and *Daybreak* 135). They also recognize the oftentimes cloying and cruel character of pity (see *Zarathustra,* "The Convalescent," *Daybreak* 135, and BGE 29). Furthermore, their pride indicates an awareness of the potential role of suffering and pity in enhancement and growth ("it almost determines the order of rank *how* profoundly human beings can suffer" BGE §270). Significantly, however, the proud and private character of tragic pity diminishes its public relevance; the highest sufferers and sympathizers will flee from public view. This contributes to the endangered character of the higher types, and even accounts for some of the extremes of Nietzschean rhetoric. Perhaps it also for this reason that tragic pity is associated with theatrical forms: though such suffering occurs in real life, artistic recreations of such experiences are, for the

reasons outlined above, more tasteful and humane. Theatrical forms are also essential to the cultivation of higher types, for they facilitate indirect, selective communication and education.

Since tragic pity does not involve a great disparity between types, it does not turn the subject into the mere instrument of its object, and its goals are far from those of "hedonism or pessimism, utilitarianism or eudaemonism" (BGE §225). Indeed, the higher characters of both the subject and object of higher pity speak to the very different character and purpose of tragic suffering and pity, as they are presented by Nietzsche. Whereas ordinary pity is hedonistic and concerned primarily with physical weakness and the alleviation of pain, tragic pity is for the "creator in man" and considers "all these ways of thinking that measure the value of things in accordance with *pleasure* and *pain*" as "mere epiphenomena and wholly secondary" (BGE §225). Tragic pity is for the suffering of the spirit; its causes and sources are existential and spiritual. Furthermore, where ordinary pity seeks the end of suffering, the higher types have a sense of the essential role that suffering plays in human life:

> The discipline of suffering, of great suffering – do you not know that it is this discipline alone which has created every elevation of mankind hitherto? That tension of the soul in misfortune which cultivates its strength, its terror at the sight of great destruction, its inventiveness and bravery in undergoing, enduring, interpreting, exploiting misfortune, and whatever of depth, mystery, mask, spirit, cunning and greatness has been bestowed upon it – has it not been bestowed through suffering, through the discipline of great suffering? (§225)

This insight regarding the meaning of suffering informs the experience of tragic pity as Nietzsche understands it. Though such pity is still an experience of sympathy with suffering, its purpose is not hedonistic. Instead, such suffering creates a tension in the soul that has the potential to contribute to the elevation of man. It may even call for an increase in overall pain insofar as the "creator" in man demands sacrifice on the part of

the "creature"; the latter is "what must be formed, broken, forged, torn, burnt, made incandescent, and purified" (§225). Unlike the confused life-denying hedonism of ordinary democratic pity, the tragic perspective has some appreciation of the complicated character of suffering. It refuses to seek its eradication.

The positive Nietzschean outlook, then, is at once more self-conscious about the oftentimes negative character pity, and more aware of the potential positive consequences of suffering and pity; it is, in addition, more honest about the cruel pleasures that sometimes pertain to suffering and pity. In aphorism §229 of Part 7 of *BGE,* "Our Virtues," Nietzsche candidly suggests that "almost everything we call 'higher culture' is based on the spiritualization and intensification of *cruelty* – this is my proposition; the 'wild beast' has not been laid to rest at all, it lives, it flourishes, it has merely become – deified." Here, Nietzsche says something radical about the nature of the psychological forces that sustain Christianity (see GM 1.15, 2.7, AC 62), and, in the next lines, he relates such cruelty directly to the experience of tragedy: "That which constitutes the painful voluptuousness of tragedy is cruelty; that which produces a pleasing effect in so-called tragic pity, indeed fundamentally in everything sublime up to the highest and most refined thrills of metaphysics, derives its sweetness solely from the ingredient of cruelty mixed with it." Though philosophers "both ancient and modern" have promulgated "immodest fat errors" about the purgative, healing, and humanizing character of the tragic *pathos*, Nietzsche insists on its intimate connection to the pleasures of cruelty.[132] As he notes in this same aphorism of *Beyond Good and Evil*, "there is also an abundant, over-abundant enjoyment of one's own suffering, at making oneself suffer" (229). For

[132] Nietzsche seems to suggest that prior philosophers have been self-deceived about the role that cruelty plays in the philosophic life – but it seems equally likely that, far from being self-deceived, other philosophers simply disagree with Nietzsche about the self-cruelty involved in philosophizing. That said, Nietzsche is, especially in the later works, writing for a post-Christian audience, and this does help to account for his emphasis on cruelty and self-sacrifice.

Nietzsche, then, suffering and pity are immensely complex phenomena that are difficult to characterize – they are at once good and bad, painful and "voluptuous," cruel and delightful.

A question arises here as to the possible contradictory character of Nietzschean thought, for we are tempted to demand that he come down on one side or another on the question of suffering's pleasantness. This may be an unreasonable demand on our part, insofar as human life is full of such apparently contradictory phenomena that are unified in experience and separate in speech, but Nietzsche does come some way in addressing it. Insofar as Nietzsche endorses tragic pity, he does also endorse the pains and pleasures that accompany suffering. He is very conscious that this will be a troubling fact for most readers, acknowledging in *Beyond Good and Evil* that, whereas ordinary pity seeks to abolish suffering, "It really seems that *we* would rather have [suffering] higher and worse than ever" (§225). To an extent this supposition is fair, for the achievement of Nietzsche's goal will entail an increase in suffering. But the overall picture is more complex. Nietzsche insists that suffering is not anathema to human beings. Rather, it is suffering without purpose that leads to the deepest nihilism (see GM 2.7, 3.28, BGE §55). Furthermore, Nietzsche shows how suffering and the deepest pleasures are deeply entwined, which complicates any supposed endorsement of suffering. But beyond this, Nietzsche makes it clear that neither pain nor pleasure can be the driving motive behind the tragic experience, or any other higher form of life. He begins aphorism 225 with a rejection of such a hedonistic calculus, and restates his claim at the end of the aphorism: "To say it once more: there are higher problems than all problems of pleasure, pain, and pity; and every philosophy that stops with them is a naïveté." Though the pain of the higher types may indeed lead to positive transformations and joys, these consequences do not serve to ground and legitimate Nietzsche's higher morality. The higher morality is not

better because it is ultimately more pleasant, but because it is a superior expression of the will to power; it justifies and validates certain forms of suffering only – those that are more conducive to life and growth.[133] The key question that emerges here is *how* the tragic *pathos* contributes to this higher, open-ended positive goal.

As early as *The Birth of Tragedy,* Nietzsche makes plain his view that the Hellenic taste for tragedy was indicative of a superabundant capacity for life, and thus that there is a deep connection between the capacity for suffering and life itself. Indeed, he goes further, suggesting near the opening of the essay that the Greeks' capacity for suffering certain truths was a causal determinant of their ability to create a world "to touch whose very hem would give us the greatest happiness" (BT 13). In face of the wisdom of Silenus, the ancient Greeks transfigured life through art and the creation of the Olympian gods, and thereby provided positive seductions to life itself.[134] While at the time of his writing of the *Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche was hopeful that Wagner would

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[133] The ultimate grounds of the higher morality is an enormous difficulty in Nietzschean thought, and is the source of one of the great faultlines in Nietzsche scholarship. A good introduction to this problem can be found in Peter Berkowitz' *Nietzsche: The Ethics of an Immoralist* (1995, 1-21). While I grant that Nietzsche's epistemology creates a massive difficulty for his readers, and is intended to do so, I also agree with the spirit of the following suggestion from Berkowitz:

> The common tendency today to view questions about language and interpretation as the central issues in Nietzsche's thought drastically shifts the actual center of gravity in his books. Nietzsche's fundamental concern with ethical and political questions is obscured when scholars make him over into a theorist primarily concerned with questions of how we know rather than of how we should live. (3)

[134] The Silenic wisdom reads "Oh, wretched ephemeral race, children of chance and misery, why do you compel me to tell you what it would be most expedient for you not to hear? What is best of all is utterly beyond your reach: not to be born, not to *be*, to be *nothing.* But the second best for you is—to die soon.' According to Nietzsche, the world of the Olympians is related to this folk wisdom "even as the rapturous vision of the tortured martyr to his suffering" (section 3, 42). The Greek gods are created in response to this painful wisdom, and thereby justify life. "At the Apollinian stage of development, the "will" longs so vehemently for this existence, the Homeric man feels himself so completely at one with it, that lamentation itself becomes a song of praise"; Nietzsche's treatment of Jesus in the *Antichrist* corresponds to his discussion of the wisdom of Silenus: for Nietzsche, Jesus' suffering is evidence of his belief in the value of life (AC 29-31). Nietzsche's laments for the higher man share this character of positive lament – a lament that speaks to the value of that which is endangered.

renew the Greek art of transfiguration, it is a task that Nietzsche arguably takes up himself in later works.

As early as *Daybreak*, for example, we find the following illuminating aphorism:

> *Closing one's ears to lamentation.* – If we let ourselves be made gloomy by the lamentation and suffering of other mortals and cover our own sky with clouds, who is it will have to bear the consequences of this gloom? These other mortals, of course, and in addition to the burdens they bear already! We can offer them neither *aid* nor *comfort* if we want to be the echo of their lamentation, or even if we are merely always giving ear to it – unless, that is, we had acquired the art of the Olympians and henceforth *edified* ourselves by the misfortunes of mankind instead of being made unhappy by them. But that is somewhat too Olympian for us: even though we have, with our enjoyment of tragedy, already taken a step in the direction of this ideal divine cannibalism. (§144)

Though lamentation threatens humanity because of the pervasive character of suffering, here again Nietzsche affirms and promotes the Olympian art of transfiguring human suffering. He also, again, indicates that he has hopes for some kind of return to the perspective of the Greeks, and that tragedy might play a key role in such a development.[135] We also get a glimpse here of how Nietzsche understood tragedy to play such a role, insofar as the aphorism suggests that the experience of tragedy can be edifying. A passage from *Ecce Homo* echoes this idea: "My humanity does *not* consist in feeling with men how they are, but in *enduring* that I feel with them. My humanity is a constant self-overcoming" (EH Wise, 8). Nietzschean pity is unavoidable but can be life-enhancing, for in witnessing the suffering of another one can strengthen oneself against like travails, "instead of being made unhappy by them." Through the experience of tragedy, Nietzsche seems to suggest, a sensitive type might learn to steady the soul in the

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[135] See also GS §370. Having critiqued romantic pessimism for its shallowness, Nietzsche adds in parentheses:

> That there still *could* be an altogether different kind of pessimism, a classical type – this premonition and vision belongs to me as inseparable from me, as my *proprium* and *ipsissimum* [my own and quintessence]; only the word "classical" offends my ears, it is far too trite and has become round and indistinct. I call this pessimism of the future – for it comes! I see it coming! – *Dionysian* pessimism.

face of the pain that inevitably comes with growth.[136] That this type of spiritual indulgence, or "divine cannibalism," held continuing promise for Nietzsche is also evident in the narrative of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, where, presumably an 'ideal reader' would take part in Zarathustra's existential struggles vicariously, for the ultimate purpose of overcoming them.

It is in *Twilight of the Idols,* however, that Nietzsche provides his most definitive statement on the meaning of the tragic *pathos*. There he addresses Aristotle's account of tragedy directly:

> Saying yes to life even in its strangest and hardest problems; the will to life rejoicing over its own inexhaustibility even in the very sacrifice of its highest types – that is what I call Dionysian, that is what I understood as the bridge to the psychology of the tragic poet. Not in order to get rid of terror and pity, not in order to charge oneself of a dangerous affect by its vehement discharge – Aristotle misunderstood it that way – but in order to be oneself the eternal joy of becoming, beyond terror and pity – that joy which includes even joy in destroying. (TI, final section 5; also quoted in EH BT 3).

Aristotle takes tragic pity to be a purgative emotion that helps to calm and restore the soul to its natural state, but Nietzsche emphatically disagrees. Nietzsche understands the goal to be more dynamic. He describes the tragic *pathos* in the language of will to power, becoming, and self-overcoming (or, "in being oneself the eternal joy of becoming"). Translated into terms of the will to power, Aristotle's account means the dissolution of the very forces of the soul that tragedy is designed to strengthen. The goal of the tragic poet is not to alleviate the pain of terror and pity, but rather to harden the soul against the pains that are necessary to growth, and furthermore to indulge and rejoice in the superabundance of the will to life by facing "its strangest and hardest problems" head-on. This can only come about through identification with the tragic hero and his struggles;

[136] As we saw in Chapter 4, Nietzsche suggests that he was able to do this with is own pain: "For a typically healthy person, being sick can even become an energetic stimulus for life, for living *more*… I turned my will to health, to *life*, into a philosophy" (EH I 2).

yet, even while the hero suffers and is destroyed, the spectator works to come to terms with and overcome the imitative experience of his own soul.

Nietzsche argues that ancient tragedy, far from providing evidence of the depths of Hellenic pessimism, is a sign of great strength and life; like the great tragic hero Achilles, tragedy itself flirts with nihilism, and, for some, such encounters can lead to positive values and growth. From early on, the tragic element in Nietzschean philosophy brings us face to face with the Dionysian cycle of destruction and rebirth, the death of God, the stark wilderness that is nature, and the destructive dimensions of creative renewal.

Through tragedy, the healthy encounter sublimely painful situations – even the "sacrifice of the highest types" – and are strengthened and sustained by the experience. Whereas Aristotle suggests that the spectator in tragedy is purged of pity and fear through the collapse of the tragic hero, Nietzsche's claim is that the spectator enjoys enduring *through* the suffering of the hero, and seems to suggest that such an imitative experience can lead to genuine growth in the soul. Though such experience depends on tragic pity, in and through the experience tragic pity and terror are ultimately overcome – perhaps in witnessing tragedy, both drives are sacrificed to the will to life. The full tragic *pathos*, then, comprehends the experience and overcoming of tragic pity, and thus comes to terms with the presumable death of the hero. The key distinction between Aristotle and Nietzsche on this point seems to be that for Nietzsche the energy of the soul is not purged through tragic pity, but integrated into the process of enhancement. This dynamic aspect of tragic pity again distinguishes Nietzsche from the stoics (contra Nussbaum, 154).

In keeping with these goals, and in stark contrast to the concurrent idealism and nihilism of the morality of ordinary pity, the tragic experience is characterized by its realism. The language of hard realism permeates Nietzsche's descriptions of the will to

power and of the higher man. To Nietzsche, tragic choices in favor of the high and 'terrible,' and involving the potential ruin of the low, are valuable because man's striving occurs within a finite, earthly system where genuine decay is a perpetual danger: "In the great economy of the whole, the terrible aspects of reality (in affects, in desires, in the will to power) are to an incalculable degree more necessary than that form of petty happiness which people call 'goodness'" (EH I 4). Indeed, not only does the higher type encounter such difficult truths, his very being (and becoming) consists of making difficult choices: the higher type, Nietzsche explains, "conceives reality *as it is*, being strong enough to do so; this type is not estranged or removed from reality but is reality itself and exemplifies all that is terrible and questionable in it – *only in that way can man attain greatness*" (EH IV 5). In his understanding of the necessities underlying reality, the strong type recognizes the necessity of not reacting to all stimuli, of discriminating, and of making sacrifices (see BGE §41, "One must know how *to conserve oneself*: the hardest test of independence," see also §55 and §202). As he concisely puts it in *Ecce Homo*, "negating *and destroying* are conditions of saying Yes" (EH IV 4). Again in *Ecce Homo,* Nietzsche notes that the man who is "well-turned-out" is "a principle of selection, he discards much" (EH I2).This type, representative of Nietzsche himself, knows himself and his capacities. He knows, for example, when pity will be his ruin, and when it is something he can afford; he is aware of his own finitude and guards his energy accordingly. We might say that the tragic experience, with its pain and cruelty and sacrifices, prefigures this later 'well-turned-out' state of selectivity.

Which is to suggest that, in Nietzsche's understanding, the tragic experience prefigures the philosophic one. Both are preeminently concerned with truth, and both require courage in the face of reality. In the *Gay Science*, Nietzsche suggests that the tragic type, in its suffering of overfullness, seeks "the Dionysian art and likewise a tragic

view of life, a tragic insight" (§370); in seeking the tragic insight, the Dionysian tests himself and relishes his courage and strength. In *Ecce Homo,* Nietzsche explains: "Philosophy, as I have so far understood and lived it, means living voluntarily among ice and high mountains – seeking out everything strange and questionable in existence" (EH F3). The tragic experience provides a schooling in the kind of courage that is required by the philosophers and value-creators of the future. The philosophic experience, too, consists of lessons in endurance:

> How much truth does a spirit endure, how much truth does it dare? More and more that became for me the real measure of value. Error (faith in the ideal) is not blindness, error is cowardice.
>
> Every attainment, every step forward in knowledge, follows from courage, from hardness against oneself, from cleanliness in relation to oneself. (EH F 3)

For Nietzsche, courage and the discovery of truth are inseparable because truth can be dreadful (EH II 4). Furthermore, in philosophy, as in tragedy, there is suffering, cruelty, and complexity. When we learn of the cruelty of tragedy in BGE §229, we also learn that "in all desire to know there is already a drop of cruelty." And in aphorism 230, Nietzsche's characterization of the will to power of the man of knowledge echoes the language of "divine cannibalism" discussed above. In the man of knowledge, the 'fundamental' will (to superficiality and simplicity) is countered by a "sublime inclination," which Nietzsche describes as follows:

> [The sublime inclination] takes a profound, many-sided and thorough view of things and *will* take such a view: as a kind of cruelty of the intellectual conscience and taste which every brave thinker will recognize in himself, provided that he has hardened and sharpened for long enough his own view of himself, as he should have, and is accustomed to stern discipline and stern language. (§230)

In Nietzsche's understanding, the tragic experience, it would seem, is closely related to philosophy in that it helps to accustom the soul to "stern discipline and stern language."

This brings to light what may lie at the core of Nietzsche's critique of ordinary pity: in the service of comfort, it actively evades hard realities and hard truths.

Nietzsche's critique of the value of ordinary pity, then, even "in a man of knowledge," is complicated by his extensive preoccupation with the experience of tragic pity. His later works seem targeted towards cultivating a certain tragic experience in the reader: the encounter with the possibility of decline, associated with the nihilism and loss of meaning brought about by the death of God. It is my suggestion that his critique of ordinary pity contributes to the intensity of this encounter, contributing both to the readers' fear of decline and their pity for the higher man who is threatened by modern morality. This quintessentially Nietzschean 'tragic insight' – fear and pity resulting from an encounter with the most terrible truth of our time – serves as one of Nietzsche's important means of reawakening the reader's will to power. Overcoming ordinary pity is a necessary step in the revitalization of the higher drives of the soul; tragic pity, while still fundamentally concerned with suffering, can nevertheless contribute to an experience of self-restraint, overcoming, and empowerment. Tragedy can elevate the subject of tragic pity to consider difficult new questions, and helps to prepare the psyche for the oftentimes painful realization of other difficult truths. The cruelty of tragedy fosters the kind of discipline and hardness necessary to life as Nietzsche understands it. An education in Nietzschean tragedy thus serves to accustom the reader to painful situations and thoughts, and to learn endurance and steadiness in the face of adversity. Tragedy provides us with the opportunity to confront such realities, and, perhaps, to overcome the power they exert on our existence – at least for fleeting moments. For the philosopher, Nietzsche promises, reality and truth can be consistently enjoyed; the philosophic soul actively seeks encounters with hard truths, and may even learn to put them in the service of life.

III. Tragic Pity, Aristocratic Politics

It is tempting to think that Nietzsche's psychological insights are separable from his political views, and it is not uncommon for contemporary readers of Nietzsche to deny that his works have concrete political implications that correspond to the rest of his philosophical *oeuvre*. As mentioned in the previous chapter, sometimes commentators argue that Nietzsche is essentially apolitical, and that his emphasis on culture means that efforts to discuss his political views are often misbegotten (see, for example, Thomas Brobjer, 1998).[137] Others argue that Nietzsche's political assertions represent an unfortunate but detachable element in his philosophy, which is otherwise consistent with – even supportive of – modern, pluralistic liberal democracies (William Connolly, David Owen, Lawrence Hatab, Dana Villa, and Alan Schrift are representative of this group). Both of these groups contributes something to an evaluation of Nietzsche's politics, but I disagree with their overall assessments. While I agree with Thomas Brobjer's argument that Nietzsche's deepest concerns are cultural, he nevertheless overstates the extent to which politics takes second place, and, by emphasizing too narrow an understanding of the political, to understate the interdependency of culture and politics. In endeavoring to separate Nietzsche's politics from his philosophizing, the liberal democratic Nietzscheans commit a similar error. Though I appreciate their efforts to make Nietzsche relevant to liberal democracy, it seems to me that they ought to refrain from attributing liberal democratic motives to Nietzsche himself. Even while Nietzsche might have granted that liberal democracy is not a terrible regime, since it allows for the flourishing of excellence, it is far from being his ideal, since it typically does nothing to cultivate and

[137] In 1998 Thomas Brobjer and Don Dombowsky engaged in a series of useful "Diskussionen" on the subject of Nietzsche's politics in the pages of *Nietzsche Studien*. The exchange provides a clear picture of what is at stake in the debate, and the various ways in which the central issues of Nietzschean politics tend to get framed.

sustain it. Nietzsche's many scathing criticisms of democracy may not strike the ears of a liberal democrat quite as sorely as they do, say, those of a social democrat, but his critique nonetheless aims at prejudices familiar to both groups. Nietzsche's attack on democratic morality is an attack on democratic politics, and it aims to upset and destabilize modern democratic prejudices and modern democratic institutions.

Against these apolitical or liberal democratic readings stand those who read Nietzsche, first of all, as overtly political, and, secondly, as anti-democratic and pro-aristocratic. Bruce Detwiler, Daniel Conway, and Don Dombowsky all fit into this group, though they differ considerably in their emphases when it comes to Nietzsche's political recommendations. Our explorations thus far all favor the third group's general evaluation of Nietzsche's politics. As we saw in Chapter 3, Nietzsche's powerful critique of Rousseau is largely rooted in his disagreement with Rousseau's contributions to egalitarian politics; despite the deep respect Nietzsche quietly displays for Rousseau during the middle period, he nevertheless feels strongly enough about the political conditions of his day that he is willing to "sacrifice" Rousseau in his efforts at cultural and political reform. In Chapter 4, we explored Nietzsche's inflated personal rhetoric, and how it serves to highlight human inequality via an honest presentation of his own particular superiority; we also saw how Part IV of *Ecce Homo*, read in conjunction with the *Antichrist,* provides an implicit account of why Nietzsche takes the liberties he does in the final period: having discovered the key to the ugly historical successes of the priests – namely, violent, blood-soaked rhetoric – Nietzsche decides to respond in kind. His willingness to do so indicates not some ironical stance on the state of modernity, nor his own desperation in the face of modern nihilism, but signifies instead the sincerity and severity of his accusation against modernity.

Having explored Nietzsche's shrill critique of ordinary pity in the soul in this chapter, and Nietzsche's efforts to rehabilitate tragic pity on behalf of the "higher types," we are in a better position to appreciate the specifics involved in his rhetorical tactics. Nietzsche hopes that his rhetorical attack on everything egalitarian and democratic in his final works will inspire his audience with the tragic *pathos* – a mix of fear and pity – and that this will inspire them to act on the part of new cultural and political goals. As we have already seen, there is more to Nietzsche's rhetorical final period than a critique of the psychology of pity and egalitarian mores. His Nietzsche's elevation of tragic pity above ordinary pity seems to point straight to aristocracy. Tragic pity represents a hard and steadfast preference for what is highest in the psyche, and the political analogy would be a hard and steadfast preference for certain elite types over others, facilitated by the newly-hardened will to power of these same higher men. That Nietzsche means his readers to consider even the most radical and violent versions of such political possibilities is undeniable, for he does not limit his harshest language to psychological phenomena, but regularly applies it to politics as well. All of the later polemical works, beginning with *Zarathustra*, contain passages that explicitly suggest the sacrifice and/or subordination of the weak to the strong; they also include passages that celebrate distinctly Machiavellian methods and singularly undemocratic men.

As we saw in the previous Chapter, in the *Antichrist,* for example, Nietzsche goes so far as to speak favorably of the hierarchical caste system solidified in the Laws of Manu. Though this passage seems to be largely in the service of his critique of the Christian state, it is nonetheless undeniable that he thinks the caste system of Manu to be superior to democratic egalitarianism. Earlier in the work, Nietzsche speaks well of the convictions of "We Hyperboreans," which include the following:

> Not contentment, but more power; *not* peace at all, but war; *not* virtue, but proficiency (virtue in the Renaissance style, *virtu*, virtue free of moralic acid).
>
> The weak and ill-constituted shall perish: first principle of *our* philanthropy. And one shall help them to do so.
>
> What is more harmful than any vice? – Active sympathy for the ill-constituted and weak – Christianity. (AC 2)

With these, Nietzsche provides counter-convictions to those of the Christian idealists, and although he later calls convictions as such into question (section 55), he also expresses his own willingness to lie on behalf of healthy cultural and political goals, and it is clear that he considers the Hyperboreans to be more humane than the Christians, even in their cruelty (sections 54-55). Nietzsche makes similarly extreme chilling remarks in the *Genealogy* (II.12) and in *Zarathustra* (see, for example, "Of War and Warriors" and "Of the Rabble"). Though in most of these instances Nietzsche is being overtly polemical, and is even so good as to name his enemy, this does not diminish the fact that he is sincere about the superiority of brutal and cruel aristocratic regimes over softened democratic ones. The fear-mongering rhetoric of Nietzsche's final period is calculated to instigate a cultural reversal on the scope of the democratic revolution brought about through the Christian religion. Far from representing Nietzsche's decadence, the lucid rhetoric of this period represents Nietzsche's active practical strength.

It is clear, then, that Nietzsche puts his rhetorical power behind a revaluation of democratic egalitarian values, in favor of new, hierarchical and aristocratic ones. What is less obvious is where exactly Nietzsche stands when it comes to actual practical recommendations. What remains to consider further, then, is the character of the aristocracy he envisions. It seems to me that two alternatives remain compatible with Nietzschean philosophy: cultural aristocracy within a liberal democratic political order, and political aristocracy. On this front, Nietzsche is rather obscure, and there is much debate about whether he ultimately endorses a rigid political hierarchy involving legal

segregation of the population along lines of relative nobility – something along the lines of the Laws of Manu – or a more fluid cultural meritocracy.[138] The former would be more likely to require a violent founding and the creation of distinct impermeable classes; the latter is more consistent with liberal democracy, and would see the emergence of powerful individuals who exert spiritual and cultural influence through the creation of new values. There is textual evidence for both possibilities, and my basic suggestion is that, while Nietzsche is primarily concerned with promoting the latter, he holds open the possibility of something like the former taking hold in the distant future. Even so, the "grand politics" of the future will ultimately depend on the character of those who bring such politics about. While I can offer only a sketch of Nietzsche's vision here, there are certain features of the noble types that help to illuminate the ultimate character of an "ideal" Nietzschean politics.

The first thing to note about the noble types that Nietzsche envisions for the future is their genesis. What is striking is that, despite Nietzsche's claim that "Every enhancement of the type "man" has so far been the work of an aristocratic society—and it will be so again and again" (257), he does not seem to think that an aristocratic political community is necessary for the emergence of higher individuals. Instead of advocating revolution for the sake of creating the conditions that make greatness possible, Nietzsche encourages long-term retreat and solitude on the part of those who might become great. This is a theme in his later works from *Zarathustra* to the *Genealogy*. The narrative motion of the former is largely shaped by Zarathustra's movement through various degrees of isolation and solitude, and in the *Genealogy* solitude and isolation from ordinary society are seen as necessary to noble development (3.14); in *Beyond Good and*

[138] With these as our remaining alternatives, we can see more clearly why there is so much heated debate about whether Nietzsche is concerned primarily with culture or politics.

Evil a love of solitude is considered a privilege of the strong (see §29, §268-272) and Nietzsche even at one point explains how individuals of the "most noble descent" might be inclined "through lofty spirituality" to live withdrawn and contemplative lives through which they might reserve "only the most subtle type of rule" for themselves (religious rule, 61). In *Ecce Homo,* Nietzsche also suggests that his books might provide the kind of aristocratic nurture that is lacking in contemporary society, and, with a good dose of irony, refers to *Beyond Good and Evil* in particular as a "school for *gentilhommes*" (EH, "Good Books," BGE 2). Solitude serves many functions, including the cultivation of the *pathos of distance*, and far-sighted perspective on the whole.

I mention the origin of the noble new types in Nietzschean thought, and Nietzsche's emphasis on solitude, because it shows that political aristocracy is not an essential ingredient of the individual man's elevation, and in order to highlight that there is an apolitical quality to much of Nietzsche's thought, especially when it comes to individual pedagogy. The entreaty to solitude in Nietzsche's works comes across much more clearly than any particular political scheme for the future. Some have taken this as Nietzsche's final word on politics. While I think it is significant that Nietzsche emphasizes solitude and a retreat from contemporary forms, it also seems that he envisions an eventual turn to politics on the part of at least some of the higher types. Indeed, in his book on Nietzsche's "aristocratic radicalism," Bruce Detwiler's most powerful argument in favor of a robust political interpretation of Nietzsche is his suggestion that the doctrine of the will to power ultimately leads beyond the realm of personal self-cultivation and growth, into the political arena. Once Nietzschean men and women have achieved some degree of empowerment and enhancement, they will be drawn to political life, where their power might be expressed more expansively. Detwiler describes his position as follows: "There is scant justification for limiting the will to

power to a question of sublimation and self-perfection. Repeatedly, Nietzsche affirms a more comprehensive notion that includes a will to power over others as well as over oneself, and this appears to have explicit political implications" (43). I would add that it is during the period of self-searching isolation that the content of these 'political implications' will begin to take shape for the student of Nietzsche. Eventually they will confront the question of their own political involvement. How does a practically-oriented student of Nietzsche's best exert his/her will to power? The enthusiastic supporter of political aristocracy will encounter practical difficulties early on.

One problem with taking Nietzsche's most violent political suggestions at face value, such that politics would imitate the destructive and creative activity of will to power in the soul, is that it obfuscates difficulties in the analogy between the individual and society. That is to say, it posits discrete, determinable, classes within contemporary society that might be considered analogous to the distinct drives within the soul. Nietzsche, however, is altogether insistent regarding the mixed-up and heterogeneous character of modern peoples. This is especially evident in *Beyond Good and Evil*, where Nietzsche speaks throughout of the contemporary era of dissolution which "mixes races together" and makes men of "diversified descent" (§200), of the "hybrid European" (§223), and of semi-barbarian men of "historical sense" (§224). When, in aphorism 200, Nietzsche discusses the mixing of races, he emphasizes that the higher types will arise from this same group, and that the high and the low "belong together and owe their origin to the same causes";[139] when master and slave morality are first mentioned in BGE, Nietzsche "immediately" finds it necessary to mention that "in all higher and more mixed

[139] Nietzsche does emphasize in §200 that contemporary circumstances do permit the emergence of the very strongest types – but they will be utterly exceptional, and the suggestion does not seem to be that there is a strong foundation for a just form of aristocracy. One might reply that §200 opens the door to tyranny or fascism.

cultures there also appear attempts at mediation between these two moralities" (§260). In aphorism 263, Nietzsche mentions another difficulty of distinguishing high from low: "it is possible that even among the common people, among the less educated, especially among peasants, one finds today more *relative* nobility of taste and tactful reverence than among the newspaper-reading *demi-monde* of the spirit, the educated." While the kind of segregation between moral types that would be necessary for "aristocratic radicalism" is an idea that Nietzsche entertains in the *Genealogy* (where he provides an abstract account of the origins of moral types), and in his discussion of the evolution of the Hindu caste system¸ he does not seem to give the idea much weight in the more presently-grounded *Beyond Good and Evil.* The mixed character of contemporary society means that, even if one could think of ways in which the real oppression of the low on the part of the high could lead to veritable spiritual enhancement, the basic notion poses real practical difficulties in today's world as Nietzsche understands it.

While tragic pity calls for the suppression and sacrifice of the lower drives for the sake of the higher, a rigid political analogue seems untenable, at least given contemporary political reality. That is to say, the brutal subordination of whole groups is not compatible with Nietzsche's assessment of the mixed character of modern society, or with the power he attributes to democratic norms. The question thus arises as to whether radical aristocratic ideals might nevertheless be part of Nietzsche's vision of the future. Is Bruce Detwiler correct in his extreme claim that "Regardless of whether Nietzsche is advocating the eradication of 'failures' or merely being ironic, he appears to be suggesting (with evident approval) that all moral impediments to policies of human annihilation have been overturned" (109)? While Nietzsche's attacks on ordinary pity tend to be seen as the endorsement of pitiless realism in political life, this vision is at least called into question by closer study of Nietzschean psychology. Full-blown stratified

aristocracy is not necessary to the genesis of higher individuals, and the spiritual practices of Nietzschean aristocrats do not lead to any obvious path of political ruthlessness. Nietzsche's consistent critique of the hollow ends of Christianity suffices to demonstrate his opposition to all gratuitous cruelty, and his profound assessment of the psychology of *ressentiment* also seems to advise against violent repression. That said, aristocracy would probably help in the genesis of higher individuals, harsh spiritual practices probably translate into harsher politics, Nietzsche's understanding of what constitutes gratuitous cruelty may be far too narrow, and his rhetoric suggests that there are reasons for violent repression besides *ressentiment*. In the end then, Nietzschean politics are, to say the least, highly questionable.

What is less questionable is Nietzsche's image of the future philosophers: noble individuals who engage in spiritual and artistic practices of value-creation for the benefit of mankind.

IV. Noblesse Oblige?

Pity in a man of knowledge seems almost ludicrous, like sensitive hands on a Cyclops. (BGE 171)

Nietzsche's works – from *The Birth of Tragedy* to *Ecce Homo* – are replete with descriptions of greatness and of higher men, be they the gods Apollo and Dionysus of the *Birth of Tragedy*, the historical exemplars, artist-creators and educators of the *Untimely Meditations*, the Free Spirits of *Beyond Good and Evil*, the Hyperboreans of the *Antichrist,* Zarathustra and the "higher men" of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, or Nietzsche himself. The extent of his admiration for these types varies, but he clearly hopes to inspire a renewed "image of man." Nowhere is this more evident than in Part 9 of *Beyond Good and Evil*, where Nietzsche describes "What is Noble." There is much to discover in

this beautiful final prose section of what may be Nietzsche's most important work. Laurence Lampert captures the compelling quality of Part 9 when he says:

> Here more than anywhere else [Nietzsche's] subject was himself and his own experiences, and here more than anywhere else good taste and cleanliness dictated that he write obliquely, trusting to the preceding chapters to certify his right to speak of the ladder of rank from its top rung… The philosopher, the most admirable nobility, aware of both the limits and delicacy of the admirable, submits himself to the indignity of being usefully admired. (*Nietzsche's Task*, 263)

What I would like to draw attention to, in an admittedly cursory manner, is the fundamentally gentle and humane character of the highest Nietzschean types. Given Nietzsche's scathing attack on pity, in particular, his characterization of the noble type is rather surprising.

Towards the opening of *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche recommends that those readers who cannot resist his dangerous insights take courage and "make a sacrifice" of "the heart" before embarking on the journey of the book (§23); by Part 9 the picture has altered considerably. We learn in Part 9 that the highest type is not only characterized by the virtue of sympathy (*Mitgefühl*), but that even his ordinary pity (*Mitleiden*) will have value. Genuine nobility requires the kind of strength of character and hardness cultivated by a Nietzschean education, but it also values pity:

> A man who says, "I like this, I take this for my own and want to protect it and defend it against anybody"; a man who is able to manage something, to carry out a resolution, to remain faithful to a thought, to hold a woman, to punish and prostrate one who has presumed too much; a man who has his wrath and his sword and to whom the weak, the suffering, the hard pressed, and the animals, too, like to come and belong by nature, in short a man who is by nature a *master* – when such a man has pity, well, *this* pity has value. (293)

In the noble soul, pity is not an exclusive virtue, for it is present alongside physical power, hardness and steadfast resolution and judgment, but it is considered valuable in such a man (and such a man alone). Only he, it would seem, can afford it.

Ultimately, however, Nietzsche's role as "tragic poet" involves more than "pain and pleasure and pity," and, as we know from *Zarathustra,* the self-overcomings he promotes eventually include the overcoming of pity itself, including even "pity for the higher man." Here the courage cultivated by tragedy may be essential (Zarathustra to the sailors: "Courage is the best destroyer: courage also destroys pity. Pity, however, is the deepest abyss: as deeply as man looks into life, so deeply does he look also into suffering," §177). That said, overcoming pity does not necessarily imply its complete purgation from the psyche. More in keeping with Nietzsche's teaching on tragedy is that such a *pathos* will be transfigured in the course of life and growth, such that one's perspective will be decreasingly determined by suffering and pity, even in its highest incarnations. In *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche promises the advent of a genuinely tragic age, and suggests that it involves an ultimate transcendence of suffering: "the highest art in saying Yes to life, tragedy, will be reborn when humanity has weathered the consciousness of the hardest but most necessary wars *without suffering from it*" (EH BT 4). Similarly, Nietzsche suggests in BGE §30 that "there are heights of the soul from which even tragedy ceases to be tragic." That the ascent to this new elevated perspective does involve a new psychological distance on suffering, without thereby endorsing cruelty, is suggested by the fact that Nietzsche lists sympathy (*Mitgefühl*) rather than pity (*Mitleid*) as among the four virtues of the noble type, alongside courage, insight, and solitude (BGE §284). Instead of "suffering with," the noble type "feels with"; it is a simple yet essential distinction which suggests a more disciplined, and yet hardly stoical, relationship to human hardship.

The truly noble soul can also afford much besides pity and sympathy. Indeed, his will to power is characterized by an overflowing generosity motivating benevolent action: "the noble human being too aids the unfortunate but not, or almost not, from pity,

but more from an urge begotten by superfluity of power" (§260). Thus, if Nietzsche's teaching on tragic pity suggests a long period of training and endurance in hard truths, it also seems to be the case that eventually a noble soul might enjoy a superfluity of power, and that power may translate into various benevolent actions. Nietzsche's hope seems to be that a new generation of philosophers will emerge, "spirits strong and original enough to make a start on antithetical evaluations and to revalue and reverse 'eternal values'" (§203). Such a philosophical ruler – a cultural aristocrat and exemplar of the most spiritual will to power – is described in beautiful aphorism 295. Whereas at the beginning of the book Nietzsche recommends the "sacrifice" of the heart, towards the end of Part 9 he offers the description of the "genius of the heart," which he repeats in *Ecce Homo,* and which is worth repeating here:

> [The genius of the heart] teaches the stupid and hasty hand to hesitate and grasp more delicately; [he] divines the hidden and forgotten treasure, the drop of goodness and sweet spirituality under thick and opaque ice, and is a divining-rod for every grain of gold which has lain long in the prison of much mud and sand; from [his] touch everyone goes away richer, not favored and surprised – not as if blessed and oppressed with the goods of others, but richer in himself, newer to himself than before, broken open blown upon and sounded out by a thawing wind, more uncertain perhaps, more delicate, more fragile, more broken, but full of hopes that as yet have no names, full of new will and current, full of new ill will and counter current…

Although the genius of the heart at best fits awkwardly into any democratic culture, his generosity is unmistakable. Nietzsche's highest types are not ruthless moral tyrants, but rather, he hopes, will constitute a new cultural nobility, which will in turn affirm, inspire, and justify life.

Conclusion

The respective cultural projects of Rousseau and Nietzsche have left their imprint on the contemporary psyche, and on the collective political memory of the West. Both put forward powerful critiques of modernity, and voice similar concerns about the degradation of human life in the face of modern science, materialism, and capitalism. They are both especially concerned about the deterioration of morality and meaning in human life resulting from the impact of discoveries in the natural sciences. Of course their historical circumstances differed considerably – for Rousseau, the threat is treated as a potentiality, while for Nietzsche the death of God already seems a fact – and their responses differ radically, but both philosophers are preeminently concerned with the question of the relationship between the expansion of knowledge and the flourishing of life. Neither is convinced that this relationship is simply symbiotic, which has implications for men of knowledge such as they are. Indeed, this lack of symbiosis calls into question the character of relations between all extraordinary human beings and everyday society, and it raises a question that comes across as especially indelicate in our times: how might we best contend with human differences, especially when it comes to relative intellectual capacities, in an increasingly democratic age? This is a question of central import to anyone concerned with politics and rhetoric, and one that is seldom dealt with frankly. Rousseau and Nietzsche focus our attention on human inequality, and I have argued that a good understanding of their works requires a willingness to consider how they understood and approached their variegated audiences.

By way of conclusion, I would like to take up the theme of equality and inequality as it has emerged in the course of this study. I begin with a summary assessment of Rousseau and Nietzsche's respective public teachings on compassion and pity, which

illuminates the difference between Rousseauian romanticism and Nietzsche's tragic brand of existentialism, and the political implications of this difference in cultural visions. I then discuss how these differences are reflected in their autobiographical works, before turning to a consideration of the content and implications of some important areas of agreement that exist between them.

Rousseau and Nietzsche were writing more than a hundred years apart, and no doubt this gulf influenced their respective visions for public life. The differences between their outlooks are substantial enough that they can be characterized in a general sense, and usefully contrasted. As we have seen throughout this study, Rousseau endorsed a public culture of compassion. He did this against the background of the Enlightenment, and its rationalist and materialistic conception of the human soul and political society. Our close analysis of Rousseau's understanding of human pity in Chapter 1 shows that, for him, modern rationalism, and thinking in general, tend to exacerbate vain differences between people, and so he sought to foster the idea of natural human equality and the sentiments like compassion that sustain it. His endeavor relies on the psychological power of the passions in most people, and the general equality of their capacity for thinking. In this sense it is fair to consider Rousseau the father of the modern left. By studying Rousseau's works we gain a real appreciation of why the social sentiments are so important in politics, and of how democratic passions can be fostered. Rousseau teaches that one of best ways to prevent gross and vain inequalities from dominating the public sphere is to cultivate the gentler aspects of human nature that bring people together; his rhetoric places an emphasis on the plight of the poor and weak (including himself), and on human similarity. According to Rousseau, a more compassionate society will help to sustain more egalitarian forms of government and the rule of law, which will

prove more humane for everyone. A compassionate culture contributes to toleration even for the most eccentric, extraordinary, and misunderstood among us.

Rousseau, then, offers a vision of political unity with a sentimental basis. It speaks to what we might, in Nietzschean terms, call the Dionysian desire for unity with one another, and for self-forgetting. Except, of course, that Rousseau's vision also involves a fundamentally benevolent outlook on nature. Rousseau's suggestion that compassion is natural, and that men are naturally equal, adds a pastoral, naïve, and even idealistic hue to Rousseau's thought, which would, of course, come to be known as romanticism. As far as human suffering goes, the romantic Rousseau seems to suggest that it is ubiquitous and yet bearable, that as human beings we can alleviate our shared pains if we trust in nature. The promise of Rousseau's public vision is that we might, as individuals and as communities, reorient ourselves towards the goodness of our natural situation, in order to suffer less and to live more decently and honestly. Today, this Rousseauian vision translates into the thought that all human beings warrant equal concern and treatment, and that nature can and will oblige. It is a comforting picture.

Rousseau's is also an image of public life for which Nietzsche has no patience. As we saw in Chapter 3, his deepest critique of the Rousseauian outlook is that it peddles a massive misunderstanding of nature, and that, since it is founded on a lie, it cannot but contribute to certain forms of fanaticism. For Nietzsche, Rousseau's benevolent nature is a dangerous holdover of the benevolent Christian God, which blinds human beings to the dark realities of nature, and to the real needs of human life. It fosters self-deception, creates unrealistic expectations, and undermines the conditions of genuine human flourishing. The Rousseauian ideal seems to be a lazy peace that exempts human beings from asking difficult questions about existence. It may have contributed to equality, but, with only a few exceptions, it has also left modern men weak and naïve.

Nietzsche offers a comprehensive philosophical and literary reply worthy of Rousseau. His loudest rhetoric is aimed right at some of the trophies of the Rousseauian counter-Enlightenment, including compassion, the conscience, and the idea of benevolent nature. As we saw in Chapters 3 and 5, Nietzsche's attacks (on compassion and on Rousseau, and particularly in the later works) are shrill and scornful: he means to stir up his audience, even, perhaps especially, if this means making people both hardened and afraid. His persistent attack on pity reflects this desire to upset contemporary norms. Nietzsche vehemently warns that compassion threatens to undo the will of man, and to destroy higher types of lives, all for the sake of sustaining those who are naturally sickly, decadent, and uncertain about the value of life. I have argued that Nietzsche's vehement attack on the morality of compassion is part of a calibrated effort to induce a certain emotional response in his reader; while his critique of pity does threaten an encounter with nihilism (insofar as it forecasts the utter collapse of mankind's striving), it also arms the reader against nihilism by stirring up two counter-sentiments: fear regarding the future of mankind, in addition to pity *for the higher types*. Against Rousseauian romanticism, Nietzsche hopes to invoke a tragic *pathos* regarding the future of mankind.

Nietzsche's teaching, then, involves an attempt to restore the tragic outlook in the public's psyche. While Nietzsche knows that the tragic outlook is not for everyone, he nonetheless seeks to revive the spirit of tragedy in the public realm. Because it is not for everyone, Nietzsche suspects, a tragic morality is not politically dangerous in the way that romanticism is: it does not contain a simple goal (like ending suffering) that threatens to eclipse all others. But perhaps Nietzsche's most pressing concern is that the democratic stress on human equality, and the reliance on ordinary compassion on a sentimental level, contribute to systemic intolerance of inequalities of any kind – including inequality of insight. The romantic outlook makes few public demands on human thinking, for its

answers to the deepest questions are pleasing and easy to accept. The Nietzschean tragic perspective involves confronting our fears about the character of human existence (including the possibility of radical human inequality), and about the harsh and arbitrary character of nature. Tragedy does not seek to end human suffering, largely because the kind of suffering it deals with has no simple external solution. That is what gives tragedies their peculiar character – in watching a tragedy we witness something irresolvable; it typically requires us (privately) to come to terms with some difficult and painful existential truth. Nietzsche wants to make such questions a matter of public concern, for they are the soil for a potential renaissance of genuine nobility and human excellence. Ultimately, Nietzsche hopes to inspire new political forms that better reflect natural human hierarchies, and better accommodate (and cultivate) relevant human differences.

The rhetoric of Rousseau and Nietzsche's respective autobiographical works reflects the major differences between their public teachings, and helps to clarify them further; both philosophers use their personal works to strengthen their popular messages by providing exemplary "visions of man" that help to set the tone for modern life.

The basic rhetoric of *Ecce Homo* functions in precisely the opposite way as the basic rhetoric of Rousseau's *Confessions*. As we saw in Chapter 2, Rousseau constantly anticipates the miseries of his life, and writes as though he will never overcome his innumerable ill fortunes. Rousseau is quite aware that ordinary readers will find the record of his sufferings captivating, and the work is meant to have broad appeal suitable to a democratic audience. Rousseau's self-victimization may diminish the respectability of the philosopher, but it also lessens his apparent strength and power, and makes him appear non-threatening. His self-abasement is intended to contribute to a greater degree of intellectual diversity, by fostering sympathy for himself and others like him.

Nietzsche, by contrast, turns the idea of broadly appealing, popularizing rhetoric on its head. With its targeted refusal to cater to democratic sensibilities, Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo* forces an open encounter with human superiority. His rhetoric is crafted so as to drive away unsuitable readers, while seducing the rest with his self-aggrandizing good humor and confidence. He admits his own dangerousness candidly and hopes to make others more dangerous too: he worries that modernity's great toleration has turned into near-total indifference, even towards life. And while, as readers of the *Confessions,* we are constantly surprised by what turns out to be Rousseau's robust capacity for life and happiness, Nietzsche uses his autobiography to call attention to his own "great health" and the heights of his experience relative to the rest of humanity. While Rousseau makes a broad appeal and then camouflages his highest experiences from the eyes of his readers, Nietzsche alienates most readers from the outset, and then speaks far more openly about his experiences. As we saw in Chapter 2, Rousseau has fooled generations of readers with his complex ruse, and, as we saw in Chapter 4, Nietzsche is so extravagant in his self-celebration that he has alienated generations of readers with his.

The power of Rousseau's "attractive" rhetoric of compassion, and that of Nietzsche's rhetoric of "alienation," or the *pathos of distance*, ultimately call attention to the general human capacity to identify with weakness and suffering, and our relative discomfort with superiority and strength. Working from opposite perspectives, both autobiographies confront us with the strength of our commitments to equality, and the strength of our corresponding cynicism about human greatness (and human sources of authority). With this we arrive at what is perhaps the most significant difference between Rousseau and Nietzsche, which concerns their respective understanding of the appropriate role of thinkers and intellectuals in public life. Rousseau's autobiographical posturing reflects his belief that the arts and sciences threaten public morality and well-

being, and are thus best reserved for a private sphere of elite activity. While Rousseau does not go so far as to argue that intellectual activity should have no public role, he does insist that its influence should be circuitous rather than direct, and that it should go unrecognized, and even dishonored, in popular culture. Furthermore, Rousseau takes a relatively moderate stance when it comes to tradition and public orthodoxies. Compared to that of his Enlightenment contemporaries, Rousseau's philosophizing is profoundly moral, and he makes many concessions to Christianity in some works, even while he undermines it in others. Generally speaking, Rousseau's personal disguise corresponds to his desire to conceal all elite intellectual life from the public sphere.

In a very paradoxical way, then, Nietzsche's rhetoric, and his corresponding public project, is arguably the more democratic of the two, even though it is so manifestly offensive to democratic sensibilities. While Nietzsche is manifestly anti-democratic, and hopes to foster esteem for other forms of regime, he is in many ways more honest than Rousseau. While he is patently offensive, he is also open about what he thinks, and, therefore, his 'truths' are somewhat more accessible to a broader set of readers. *Ecce Homo* is more exclusive than the *Confessions* as a general matter, but in it Nietzsche is more upfront about his real concerns and the most important aspects of his life – for example, his embrace of the "super-affirmative." And again, Nietzsche's rhetorical stance corresponds to his understanding of the appropriate public role for philosophers. Unlike Rousseau, who seeks to suppress public esteem for philosophy, and promotes a pseudo-Christian teaching through the mouth of the Savoyard Vicar, Nietzsche strives to create and invigorate a new generation of friends, *the philosophers of the future*, who will publicly undertake *the revaluation of values*. While Zarathustra may be some kind of mask for aspects of Nietzsche's own character, he is arguably closer ideologically to Nietzsche than the Vicar is to Rousseau. Nietzsche and Zarathustra oppose Christianity

openly, and though they recognize the danger and immanent suffering that will arrive with the death of God, they hope that ultimately new myths, originating in human-all-too-human inspiration, will be able to renew culture and morality. Again very paradoxically, Nietzschean philosophy arguably betrays greater optimism about mankind's ability to live with the truth – especially the truth about the human sources of truth – than that of Rousseau. Does this mean that, at bottom, Nietzsche's view of human nature is rosier than Rousseau's? Or is it that Nietzsche thought the widespread arrival of such a truth to be immanent and unavoidable? These are just some of the questions concerning the significant differences between Rousseau and Nietzsche that remain with us at the end of this study.

Our general evaluation of these two philosophers needs also to take note of the considerable areas of agreement that exist between them. Both philosophers are "untimely" in that they proffer scathing critiques of modernity and modern men. They share concerns about the dehumanizing effects of modern militarism and capitalism, and, while they each in their own way celebrate the end of religious domination in Europe, they also share a strong aversion for the decline in morality and culture that accompanies the decline of the church. Both are concerned with the state of the modern psyche, and the possibility of new cultural exemplars who might inspire modern men with character and depth. They are both psychologists of the first order, and ground their respective philosophical teachings firmly in self-reflection and analysis. Though there is considerable difference in the language they employ – Rousseau speaks of active and passive principles in the soul, the interdependent relationship between thought and sentiment, and the desire of self expansion, while Nietzsche describes a hierarchical soul-structure of drives involving thoughts and sentiments and striving for power – there is considerable overlap in their psychological outlooks. Both are grounded squarely in

nature, and both conceive of the human being in terms of a dynamic composite of thoughts, affects, needs, and powers.

Both philosophers also share a vision of human nature as undetermined and malleable, and they seem to share the idea that it is the role of an elite few to shape human life, and thus to give assistance to nature in providing meaning to life. They each offer demonstrations of how such select lives might be lived, in their works and in their self-presentations. Both *oeuvres* contain passages that illuminate the role of the philosopher as an active creator of worlds of human meaning. That said, they also shy away from fully disclosing their lives – for fear of false philosopher-prophet-imitators, from a sense of modesty, or perhaps just to stimulate readers' curiosity – and therefore engage in self-concealment. Probably the greatest mystery in both philosophers' autobiographical works concerns their respective capacities for happiness. Did Rousseau really suffer so much? Did Nietzsche truly attain the capacity for full-fledged *amor fati*? Without something like a super-affirmative evaluation of their own lives, it seems unlikely that they could have achieved so much with so much confidence.

Another important point of agreement between Rousseau and Nietzsche concerns lying. While they endorse the virtues of honesty and probity, they also each concede the need for elaborate masks and dissimulation. As we saw in Chapter 2, Rousseau's elaborate understanding of truth-telling is shaped by his understanding of justice and harm; as we saw in Chapter 4, Nietzsche's commitment to truth-telling is also, ultimately, put in the service of justice as he understands it. Though their respective modes of dissimulation differ significantly, they nonetheless agree that clarity is not always the primary concern of the political philosopher who writes. Rousseau, I have argued, is more willing to positively distort the truth than Nietzsche is, but Nietzsche is manifestly willing to engage in forms of obfuscation too. Despite all of his hopes for mankind's

overcoming of nihilism, Nietzsche still employs and endorses the lie. For both philosophers, then, the malleability of human nature has real (if unclear) limits that shape and define their practical philosophizing.

Rousseau and Nietzsche's respective willingness to lie, tied as it is to their respective understanding of themselves and of human nature in general, brings us, I think, to the brink of a critical issue in contemporary political philosophy, and one of the culminating points of this study. Many readers take Nietzsche to be an early figure of postmodernism, and sometimes even Rousseau is described in these terms as well. This is not surprising and makes sense insofar as both philosophers strongly emphasize the subjective human sources of truth and insofar as they both present complex epistemologies that court misunderstanding. Both philosophers incorporate a degree of relativism into their conception of how best to understand human affairs – with Rousseau highlighting the historical dimension of human psychological development, and Nietzsche drawing our attention first and foremost to the perspectival character of all knowledge. As we seek to understand both thinkers, however, often the elitist and hierarchical character of their relativism gets neglected. Their autobiographical works help us to see this. The respective emphasis they each give to their personal works does, I think, correspond to their understanding of the essentially human character of knowledge, but it makes all the difference that they trace their respective understanding of the world to *themselves*. Both of them understand truth to be the province of a select few. For Rousseau and Nietzsche, man may be the measure of all things, but not everyone measures up equally.

Of course we are under no obligation to agree with Rousseau or Nietzsche, whether it be about their conceptions of human knowledge, their outlooks on nature and the divine, their respective hopes for politics and culture, or their rhetorical choices. With

regards to the latter, we should not ignore the fact that sometimes their writings have been put in the service of truly depraved ends, and that their willingness to engage in powerful rhetoric made this easier. Furthermore, the rhetorical manipulation of Rousseau's writings, and of Nietzsche's even more, is not unconnected to their epistemology and metaphysics: the loss of natural and divine standards may temper some forms of fanaticism, but it certainly unleashes others. Rousseau and Nietzsche, with their complicated works and their troubling legacies, remind us of all that is at stake politically in thinking and writing.

As I hope this study has contributed to showing, however, understanding Rousseau and Nietzsche today can provide us with far more than negative lessons in political prudence. Their themes continue to resonate as we struggle with the grave challenges of the 21st Century. Such challenges are not hard to come up with – mass society and citizen alienation, commercialization and the loss of culture, radical technological innovation (from advances in communication to genetic engineering), religious fanaticism, terrorism, community fragmentation, and nihilism come to mind – and while Rousseau and Nietzsche may not speak to each of these issues directly, working through their rich reflections and layered teachings on the questions of their age trains us to think through our own, and to respond in tune with our times. Though Rousseau and Nietzsche each serve as a warning about the dangers of popularizing rhetoric, a careful consideration of their works also inspires renewed fascination with the potential power of human thinking in the world. Perhaps more fundamentally, a careful consideration of Rousseau and Nietzsche's lives inspires confidence in the prospect of humanity someday being more at home here.

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